

The Organist

By Erlend Loe and Petter Amundsen

Introduction

Seven or eight months before my stint as film consultant at the Norwegian Film Fund was to expire, I received an unusual request. A film producer called and asked to meet with me, yet he refused to give me his reasons over the telephone. I didn't know of him, but I had to take him seriously as indeed you have to take all enquiries seriously, when working in this position. This is the way it is when you represent The Government. Everything is gold until you can demonstrate the contrary, so, yes, why not, and what about such and such a day? We arranged to meet.

A week later, three men turned up in my office. Two of them were film people, and I had a vague feeling I had seen them before - in passing - maybe at a film festival or some similar place, but I had no recollection of the third guy. He introduced himself as Petter Amundsen, organist. I got the impression he was the boss. The other two would make the film, but Amundsen was key to what this was all about.

The film director and the organist sat down on the couch, and the producer took a chair in my tiny office.

The producer started off by explaining that some years back he had written a book about an unsolved mystery in the skerries outside of Kragerø. Petter Amundsen had read the book and determined to solve the mystery. He had examined documents at the Public Record Office and in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, as well as conferring an old, nautical chart at a museum, and from perusing these, he had discovered something that no-one else had managed to do, though many had tried. He had done this off his own bat - for amusement. This is how it came across, at least, but the main point was that the film producer and the organist had established rapport.

Some time later, Amundsen and the director got in touch again because the former thought he had stumbled onto a new discovery, and the director was interested in bringing it onto the screen. This discovery and subsequent project were the motivation for the visit; they wanted financial support in order to make a documentary for the cinema. They already felt certain that the material was extremely controversial and would undoubtedly cause a furore both home and abroad, and on a scale that no other Norwegian project had ever approached.

The reason why they came to see me was that they thought I could help them with maintaining balance on the dramaturgical side of narrating the story (while being in need of State funding as well, of course). I leaned back in my chair, already somewhat skeptical, and waited for them to give me a bit more to go on. Amundsen began.

This is about Shakespeare, he said. Perhaps the greatest writer the world has ever produced, and without any doubt, the most important in the English language. However, for almost four hundred years people have been coming out of the woodwork, casting Shakespeare's identity into doubt. There are lots of theories, and there is a lot written on the subject, but no-one has succeeded in proving anything of importance, just as none of the world's Shakespearean professors or researchers have managed to dig up much about Shakespeare's life either. We know he has lived, but his life is poorly documented and there are no handwritten letters or notes. Despite this, the Shakespearean tradition is so strong today that writers are not above publishing even more articles and books about Shakespeare's life or works or childhood or love life or whatever. None of the original manuscripts has ever been found. Not one. Some have claimed that Francis Bacon wrote the plays, others that they were written by a collective, and there are many other suggestions about the identity of the originator. Recently (autumn 2005) I heard on the radio

that two Englishmen reckon they have documentation to suggest that a man called Neville may have written Shakespeare's plays. In other words, this tradition is alive and kicking.

So far, though, all the claims have turned out to be circumstantial or idle speculation. You can take them or leave them. Put another way, it is a question of faith. Nevertheless, Petter Amundsen claims he has uncovered the riddle, and is sitting on evidence that will shake the literati and others when he publishes it.

What sort of evidence? I ask.

Not yet, he says. First of all, he has to know that I'm willing to support the project and that I will keep what I hear to myself. Only three people know for the moment, and every new initiate into the secret constitutes a definite risk. If information leaks out, they will forfeit control. They could have gone to the BBC or Discovery Channel, or Hollywood for that matter, and they would certainly have got the go-ahead for the production there and then, but then they would have lost ownership of the material. Petter Amundsen says he knows what he is sitting on and he has to take precautions to protect his discovery.

He goes on to talk about Oak Island, a privately owned island off of Nova Scotia, where hunting for treasure have been going on for years. A few boys began digging there a couple of hundred years ago. They were reported to have found a shaft filled with earth, partitioned off with wooden joists every ten feet. After digging almost 100 feet down they came to grief by triggering an ingeniously constructed mechanism which flooded the shaft with water overnight. So someone had apparently built this shaft in such a way as to prevent anyone from finding what was buried there. Subsequent to this incident there have been many digs, but it is a complicated and costly pursuit, and the owner's interests on the island are of a nature that makes it tricky to get permission to do anything.

But Amundsen and the producer have been there. He has carried out measurements which have only made him more convinced that he is right. Other treasure hunters don't know what they are searching for, but Amundsen is certain that the references in Shakespeare's texts and the finds on the island point to the objects buried on Oak Island, having a direct connection with Shakespeare's origins, maybe even the manuscripts themselves, preserved in quicksilver.

Now we're talking. A treasure hunt with a water-seal and chests whose content will be able to re-write history. That sounds like the goods. Nevertheless I have to make certain reservations. This is not an area I know anything about. I suppose I am extremely gullible. I comment that it sounds exciting, but I have no way of determining at that moment whether Amundsen is a genius or a lunatic.

I agree to meet again in a couple of weeks to find out more details.

Before these three gentlemen knocked on my office door I had a relatively normal, relaxed attitude towards Shakespeare and his works. I have seen a small number of theatre productions and several films based directly or indirectly on his plays, and one summer, some years ago, I lay in a hammock in the mountains reading a handful of his plays in English for pleasure. I read them mostly because I thought it was upon time I did. I felt it was shameful not to have read his plays in the original, and I remember thinking it was wonderful, a linguistic pleasure. He creates characters and situations and (especially) conflicts which are sharply delineated, and therefore attractive, and I probably smiled a few times because he is not above conjuring up spirits and ghosts out of nothing when it suits him.

I haven't read all his plays, I admit, and I am not terribly interested in the ones I have read, but I can accept that Shakespeare is great, greater than most, and that if you are interested in drama and literature he cannot be ignored. At the same time, I'm a bit sick of Shakespeare, although I hadn't actually articulated it openly until now. Can't you just get over him, I have

occasionally caught myself thinking, in the same way that I've caught myself longing for the day when theaters perform Ibsen a little less frequently. In a way, it is so obviously a failure of imagination to put on Hamlet yet again. Or even The Doll's House one more time, instead of looking for something a little fresher. While we wait for new geniuses, though, we have to put on the old ones. It stands to reason.

I would also like to add, naturally, that it fascinates me that someone can rule the roost in such a way four hundred years after their passing. He's present in many modern dramas, often without the audience being aware of it, and probably even without the creator being aware. Shakespeare is somehow so universal that we carry his themes and motifs with us even when we only have peripheral knowledge of his plays. I had watched most of Kurosawa's films before I saw a link between him and Shakespeare. Children watch The Lion King year in and year out without suspecting that it was directly inspired by Hamlet: the evil lion Scar makes his little nephew Simba feel guilty about the death of his father, the king. Simba runs away from the herd and represses the past, only for it to catch up with him and force a showdown, etc, etc. These are substantial, eternal problems, and it is drama and tragedy in anyone's currency.

My knowledge of Shakespeare peters out around here. Unfortunately. I was unaware that there were controversial theories about others having written his plays. I might have been able to keep this going for a while by talking about films based on Shakespeare plays, but what I am trying to stress is that I'm an amateur, as in so many things incidentally, and I'm fascinated to meet people who are not amateurs, who have studied something in depth and thus take a risk. In my opinion, it is a lot scarier to limit yourself to one area than to be able to do a little of everything. I am, therefore, immediately attracted by someone like organist Petter Amundsen, who sweeps into my office knowing a lot more about something than I do.

To put it another way, I was looking forward to meeting Amundsen and the film people. The next meeting was to take place in Skøyen church where Petter Amundsen was the organist. I arrived in a taxi from work; I had rarely been in this part of town before. It is a residential area with quite large detached houses, lots of money, trees, parks and cemeteries. The church is in no way classical; perhaps it might be called modern. Not particularly attractive, not particularly ugly. An orange colour. As I opened the church door, a Bach fugue came to meet me. I stood listening for a while before I made my presence known. Recently I had acquired a piano myself and dreamed, and still dream, of being able to play fragments of Bach and Mozart, and the other boys, which of course is pretty well unattainable. I've never had a piano lesson in my life; I can read music because I played clarinet when I was a boy, but I struggle on, taking one day at a time, as they say. Enough of that.

Petter Amundsen was in the church playing the organ. Church organ music is always more attractive when the church is empty. The emptier, the better, somehow. Now it was absolutely empty. Standing there was almost magical, but after a while he noticed I had arrived and stopped playing. I was led into an adjacent room and asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement. What I was about to have a hand in had to remain confidential.

I was shown a facsimile of the first edition of Shakespeare's collected works from 1623 and an OHP was switched on. I was then presented with parts of Amundsen's theory. I'm not in a position to reveal details at this moment in time, it is now about a year later, but I will revert to them later, point by point. The nub of the whole matter, however, is that Amundsen has discovered 'pointers' in Shakespeare's texts. He has found ciphers and codes in the prologue (*To the Reader*) which point to later sections in the book, specific pages, which in turn point to specific words and combinations of words. It appears that some pages have been deliberately mis-numbered to make the whole thing tally, for which no-one has so far found a logical explanation. The name or the word 'Bacon' is made to stand out repeatedly as a word the author or authors of the text wanted to be picked up by the observant reader. There are also clear signs that the original name for Oak Island was incorporated into the text. And much more. In summary, Amundsen stands there telling me that the person or persons who wrote Shakespeare's works had an agenda while they were writing

exquisite drama. They created works which are so well encoded that it has taken the world hundreds of years to understand them.

Why?

The answer to your question is far-reaching, Amundsen says. We'll come back to it. Now it is time to refresh our knowledge of the English language and culture to face the new world which the English and others had just begun to colonize at this time. This is the real Da Vinci Code, he adds. Dan Brown's book is all very exciting, but the problem is he doesn't distinguish between fantasy and reality, so for those who are well up on the area the fascination disappears. By contrast, the codes in Shakespeare are absolutely real. It can't be called speculation any more. They exist and they can be demonstrated.

Naturally, I have to admit I haven't read The Da Vinci Code. I have a sort of brain injury which prevents me from ingesting the same as everyone else at the same time. I can read a book before everyone else or a good while afterwards, but not at the same time. If you were young in the eighties and frequented the same wannabe artist milieus as I did, you'd accept that's the way we are. I may have to concede the principle here, though. We'll have to see. If it would be useful for me as a consultant for this film project to read The Da Vinci Code, I'll do it of course. Or so I say.

Then we discuss how to prepare for a film. Is it better suited to being a TV or a cinematic film? (This is, by the way, a question which film consultants often automatically ask anyone who happens to be in the vicinity when they wake up, befuddled, in the middle of the night). But the answer is no. They want cinema. And so on. The long and the short of it is that I promise to support the film in its developmental phase. I still don't know if Amundsen is a genius or a weirdo, but this is obviously a risk I have to take. There are quite a few frissons in this project. And, besides, I might learn something, I think, and that's not something you turn your nose up at. We part as friends and amicable parties to an agreement, and I don't hear from Amundsen or the film people for quite a while.

The next thing to happen is that Amundsen and his two cronies hook up with a more experienced film producer. This producer fills in the requisite application forms to get money out of the Film Fund, I sign the letter of intent and the process begins. The agreement is that they keep themselves to themselves for a chunk of time and then later I will make comments. Time passes.

One afternoon, nine months later, Amundsen calls. He knows my period as a film consultant is soon up and he asks me if I would be interested in helping him to write a book about the Shakespeare material. The question is a little vague. Do I write the book or do I make comments on what he writes? He's not precisely sure himself, but he knows that he wants someone to bounce things off. My first reaction is a blunt no. As I have said, my consultant job will soon be over and for ages I have been longing to write my own things. In addition, I have to spend six months at home with our youngest son. There may also be a legal problem with a consultant giving a project support and then working on it. What do I know?

During the course of the conversation, however, I realise the project is too exciting at least not to consider. My brain works overtime to gather reasons for saying no, but even so I am on the verge of saying we can discuss it. If I have to speculate on why I don't say no immediately, I think it may have something to do with my liking for paradigm shifts. When old established theories crumble and take entrenched academics and careers and destinies down with them, it has a primitive attraction. The thought of my playing a part in it is attractive, I don't mind admitting. And whatever happens, I will never be the brains behind it. Merely a go-between. A middleman. And middlemen can be forgiven. I didn't know any better, I can say afterwards. Provided that no lives have been lost as a result of my writing, I will in a sense be able to struggle on. My dread is that I become a useful idiot for Petter Amundsen, who turns out to be a con-man. Using my name and reputation to take forward a controversial theory which doesn't measure up may well be a price I

have to pay, but so what? I don't have that much to lose. There is much more at stake for Amundsen. And what I've seen of him so far is more exciting than scaring. I have faith in the man. At any rate, I believe that what he is convinced he has found is sensational. That will do for the moment.

Petter lives at Smestad, in my own town, Oslo, and I cycle there one day after work. There is a grand piano in the living room. He serves the remnants of the previous day's 17th of May celebrations, and we discuss the beginning of his book, which I read in advance of the meeting. He is planning a fictional work in which a male protagonist has to persuade his extremely skeptical sweetheart, Robenna Castella (an enciphered name, of course), that Shakespeare's works are not written by Shakespeare. It may well work, but I tell him that this type of fiction is not something I have much experience of, or interest in, or feel that I can write. There are many others who can give him better advice during the writing than I can. We toss this to and fro. In the course of which I have an idea and I pursue it: if you want to write a book in The Da Vinci Code style, I say, I'm hardly the right person to collaborate with, but if you can visualize a documentary in which Petter is Petter and Erlend, Erlend, in other words, a text about you and me and your attempts to convince me and the reader that your theory has a right to exist, then I would consider joining him. Petter chews this one over and says afterwards that this is a definite possibility.

As I stand in the hallway, putting on my cycle helmet, Petter tells me that in addition to being an organist and Shakespeare-paradigm-breaker, he has an agency importing leaf gelatine from Germany. He sells the gelatine on to Norwegian chains of grocery shops. This is getting better and better.

A few weeks later, Petter and I meet with Anders Heger, chief editor at Cappelen. Petter wants a publisher behind him. He wants an official agreement so that we can work with it and be fairly certain that someone at the other end is willing to publish the outcome. Before the meeting Heger googled "Petter Amundsen" and suspects that the meeting is in connection with Shakespeare and Oak Island. Petter presents a light version of the same talk he gave me in Skøyen Church. Heger is in no doubt that this will be a sensation if there is anything in it, but he is better-heeled than me and thus more on his guard. He asks follow-up questions which reveal that he has done his homework and doesn't seem to be able to get enough. He wants more. He wants to see the proof. Amundsen holds his cards close to his chest, only giving enough for Heger to make out the dimensions. We get our written agreement even though ultimately there is very little obligation on Cappelen's part. It only says they will publish the book if it satisfies their quality criteria.

Let's hope it does.

First Meeting

A Dictaphone has been bought, tested and is now placed on the table in front of Petter Amundsen as we open our first meeting, a November morning in 2005. We start by discussing the conditions for our collaboration. Any future income should be split fifty-fifty. We should both be allowed to drop out at any moment should we feel that the other person does not live up to expectations, and in such a case that any person may not make independent use of existing material. For me, that might well happen, should Amundsen's theory prove to be too bizarre or speculative or otherwise unsatisfactory.

For him, it would be if my presentation of him or his theory deviates too far from his own version. This is, I assume, quite an unusual clause to drop into a joint venture contract, but in this case it is absolutely imperative for both of us. I don't really know what I am letting myself in on. And neither does Petter. That's why it is important to make sure that neither of us can go behind the other's back with material which has been worked on together, and for the process it is important to be sure that both of us give our utmost. There will be no book if either of us is unhappy. A great many research books would never have seen the light of day if a contract of this nature had not been signed.

Okay, Petter Amundsen, things are getting interesting. Let's begin. The first thing I would like to know is who you are, so that I can consider the qualifications you bring to whatever you later are going to claim.

I was born in Oslo and lived here while growing up, initially, North, at Tåsen, and then West, at Vettakollen. I would say I have enjoyed a traditional Norwegian boy's upbringing, simple, with lots of skiing, sport and maybe not the most cultural of backgrounds, even if our house resonated with the sound of classical music from the records my parents loved so much. My enthusiastic mother also saw to it that I was introduced to the theatre and the opera. I've had several - some specialist - engrossing interests over the years. I messed around with discus throwing, was deeply preoccupied with ornithology, and have always set myself fairly ambitious targets and I have never let it bother me that some of my activities could be socially stigmatising. I began to play piano with a teacher, Ingeborg Thrane, in Risalleen, as many of the other boys did, but after about 18 months I couldn't be bothered any more.

Weren't you any good?

I was average. Not very keen on practising. I was hardly a great talent, so becoming a professional organist resulted from a later obsession. When I want something to happen, it happens, even if I am not the best qualified to begin with. For example, when you play piano or organ it helps if you are properly equipped by nature, but I have a handicap. The extension tendons are stuck together between the ring and little finger of my right hand. Surgeons opened me up and saw that I have one muscle for both fingers, whereas I should have had two. I couldn't have survived as a pianist in need of being able to delicately nuance the melody line with different pressures, but because I play organ it's no big deal; the keys basically only have to be pressed and released at the correct moment - on or off - and the rest takes care of itself.

The reason why I play organ is that I was babysitting my sister one evening in 1977, in the winter months, and we watched an old Italian film in black and white on Swedish TV, about an elderly man who was showing a pregnant woman beautiful buildings, art and such in Rome or Florence or some similar location. His idea was that if she saw beautiful things, then the child would be beautiful. They entered into a church where a monk was playing the organ. Of course he was playing Bach's Toccata in D minor, and I immediately knew I had to do it too. Although my organ conquering might have been my subconscious way of combating a childhood fear of the fog horns at the Jomfruland lighthouse, but whatever the reason I went for the organ.

There has been no church-going tradition in the Amundsen family. No-one has been an organist. But there has been an interest in music among the piano-playing doctors and engineers of the family. My father's aunt, Signe Amundsen, was a celebrated opera singer, a Wagner specialist.

What did your parents do?

My father was a wine agent and bit by bit I began to work for his wine agency. He used to work for Jägermeister, I still have a Jägermeister track suit top which I use when I go jogging. It's a bit loud, orange. My mother is a retired social worker who has a deep love for culture. I spent the money I earned as a newspaper boy to buy my German teacher's harmonium, and then I was away. I majored in music at Foss high school and then spent seven years at the Norwegian State Academy of Music, finally earning my Master's degree in organ playing.

So you must have had some kind of talent then?

Yes, in my own way. I am intensely engaged in what I want to achieve and furthermore I have an analytical mind, which has usually made me aware of what stands between me and my objective. I exert all my energy when it is required.

Was it your ambition to be an organist in a church in Oslo?

No.

Can one become an organ virtuoso?

Yes, you can. And this was what I wanted the most, but during the entrance examination at the State Academy I was persuaded to switch to church music, so I did. I am happy I did that now. Particularly with regard to this project, because I learnt a lot about church history and symbolism which has helped me track down several of the discoveries I shall reveal to you soon. My own path to the church has been long and slow. Gradually I have managed to piece together my own understanding of Christianity, so that to myself I can defend my position as an employee of the Norwegian church. And I feel good about it.

In addition, I like to partake in other activities. For example, I'm a certified skiing instructor at the Tømmurstad Ski School in winter. And I compete in the slalom races for veterans. That, too, is pure will-power. A few years ago I set myself the goal of beating all the sods who left me standing when we were teenagers. There was in particular one boy in my class who was really good. He nearly made it to the national team, where his brother already was representing Norway. A few years ago I challenged him to take part in the National Masters Championships. He accepted. I ended up beating him, and to my greatest joy he didn't take it well. Later on he apologized that he did not exactly applaud my triumph. Once again it was more a question of will-power than talent. Will-power plus a certain analytical facility. That's my talent. And that's what this project exemplifies.

Have you, alongside the selling of gelatine, the playing the organ and the teaching of skiing, read much history, literature and that sort of thing?

I've always read a lot while pursuing my interests. As I said, my interests have often been very intense and all-involving.

Can you give me instances?

Early on I became a member of a Masonic Lodge, and I trawled their libraries to find out what it was all about. We are talking several shelf metres.

There it was. Petter Amundsen is a Freemason. My alarm bells are ringing loudly now. I know almost nothing about Masons or where they come from or their history, or what they basically hope to achieve, but I imagine a brotherhood living comfortably, buying cars and other goods and services from each other at favourable prices, and otherwise helping and protecting each other when necessary. It's too early to say whether this bears any consequence for Petter's credibility in my eyes. For the moment I don't let on and try to be more tolerant and generous than I usually am.

Mason, right. Okay. I assume you've grown up in circles where older men have noticed your qualities and somehow guided you into the Lodge? Don't you have to have a recommendation? No, Petter says. It wasn't like that. This was an organist thing. Lots of organists are in the Lodge. I simply thought it seemed exciting.

But you can't just knock on the door and say you want to join, can you?

Yes, you can do exactly that. People don't know this, but that's how it works. You have to take the initiative and say you wish to join.

But someone has to vouch for you?

Yes, you need to have mentors. But you're allowed to join. As long as your conduct is relatively unblemished and you're of sound mind.

And you have to be Christian?

Yes, in Norwegian lodges you have to be of Christian faith. You do. Or at least you should have an idea about God. In some foreign Masonic lodges the Talmud, Koran and the Bible are put out during the ceremonies.

Is the fact that you are or have been a Freemason integral to this project?

To a very high degree, but I should add that I am not truly a Freemason. No-one is, since it is a theoretical, utopian ideal. But I have been accepted by the Masonic order. For the time being, I have chosen to put myself on the sidelines. I was often used as the organist at functions and after a while it became a dread dealing with all the requests. Besides, as an organist you sit in the gallery and don't join in.

But if it's important that I understand this Freemason stuff, perhaps you ought to put me in the picture?

We will definitely talk about Freemasonry. It is crucial to this quest, but it's equally important to stress that the real reason behind my being able to get as far as I have, and why I have been able to draw the conclusions that I have, is because I possess a random mixture of knowledge. Freemasonry is an important constituent of that. My church connection is also important, but perhaps not quite as important as Freemasonry.

Do people weep and hold each other and have visions and insights at these Lodge meetings?

I've never experienced that. But you tend to get overwhelmed by how rich and grand it is.

Do you mean the human mind? Or the brotherhood? Or what?

This is quite different from the world we usually operate in. It is exotic in a way. It is dignified, stylish and thoroughly ordered, basking in beautiful language, wonderful surroundings, mysteries and the like. It's easy for those who don't know what it is to make fun of it, but these are profound, life-changing experiences. Some say the day they are accepted into the order is the

greatest day of their life. They might look at their spouse askance, knowing they should have said their wedding day or the day the first child was born, but they still say it.

Fine, but what was it you saw that led to us sitting here today?

The world of symbols. No more, no less. Freemasonry is permeated with symbols. With double, triple, quadruple, quintuple meanings. Now that I see the whole picture, the fact that much of it may indeed have come to us from the Knights Templar, fits in very neatly. You could say it is about a world-wide brotherhood, across religions. There are countries that ban it, but enough about that for now.

The whole thing started in the early 90's when my wife and I were expecting our first daughter and I needed a video camera with which I could film her. I had a prestigious watch, a Patek Philippe, and to buy this camera I had to sell something, so I decided to sell this watch. Suddenly I discovered there was a thriving market for the selling and buying of used watches. I sold the Patek Philippe, but that set me off. I started buying and selling old and new watches. At the time you could buy certain Rolex sports models in Norway and sell them with a very nice profit, for instance in Italy. But mostly my market was dealing in Swatch watches.

Swatch was all the rage then. I collected the data, read and waited until I knew my field. There was a huge collectors' market for Swatch watches, so I had to get to grips with auction catalogues and learn which models were in demand. When I drove around the country promoting wines and spirits I always popped into the local watchmaker's to see if he had some interesting watches, and they quite often had models which had been lying around in drawers for years and were worth their weight in gold. I sometimes bought ten to fifteen watches, with a discount, and sold them abroad through a network I had set up. Sometimes a German wholesaler came to see what I had to offer. I had a fair bit of beginner's luck and I was hooked. Then suddenly the interest ebbed away. There was a crash in the market. Some of these watches were exchanging hands for 150,000 kroner after all. They were only plastic watches. Crazy times.

Do I detect the profile of the entrepreneur spirit?

Well, I've always enjoyed making money. Right from my early teens when I desired things and calculated how much I would have to work in order to acquire them. As said, I delivered newspapers when I was very young and took jobs whenever they offered themselves. That's how it was. But the Swatch market went into decline. I had managed to sell out in time, and I thought it had been really exciting, so in many ways it was a shame this opening came to a halt just at the point when I had mastered the situation and how to exploit it. I decided to look for something else I could teach myself in the same way, but it had to be more long-term, not something which ended after a few weeks or months. That was how I came to the stock exchange.

I was in the Navy when I saw the film *Trading Places* with Eddie Murphy and Dan Ackroyd and was fascinated by how traders are able to exploit commodity trading. I had no idea there existed exchanges for orange juice or pork bellies, but there are real markets, I realised, and the exciting part is that you can buy the rights of a large lorry load of, say, pork bellies for very little money. You can put two thousand kroner down and control the movement of pork bellies costing, say, a hundred thousand. And if these pork bellies go up in price to one hundred and five thousand, you've earned five thousand. And that's not five per cent, but two hundred and fifty, because you only put down two thousand kroner, which you get to keep on top of the profit. It's all about sitting on your rights and then selling again before the real pork bellies are delivered. Are you with me?

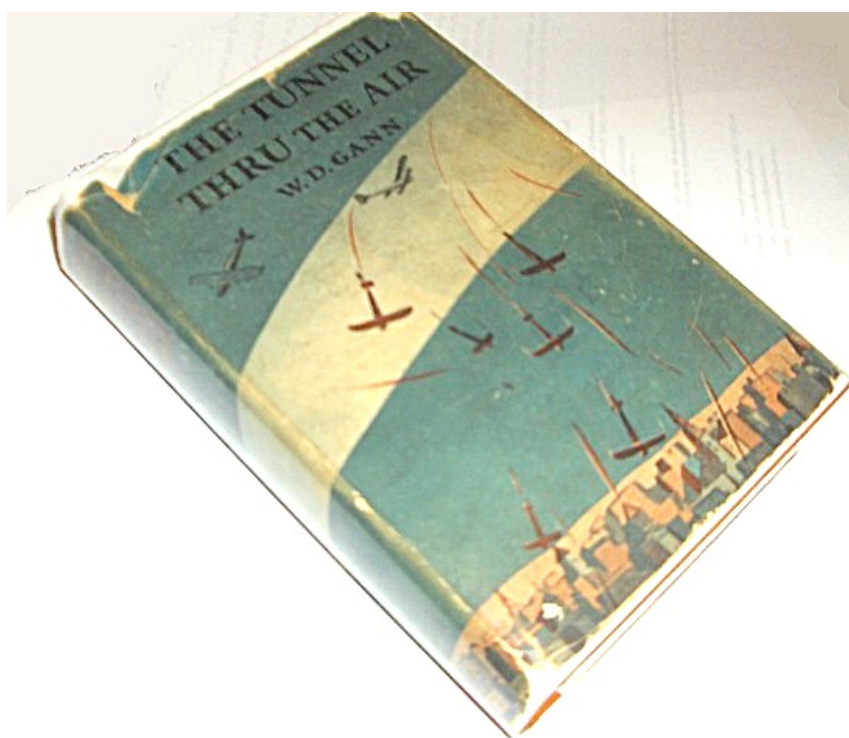
I think so.

If you own control of pork bellies to be delivered in May, you would better have sold them by March. And you can also sell before you've bought anything at all, it is called short-selling. This is high-level speculation with lots of options and many pitfalls, of course.

Anyway, I decided I needed to get involved in futures trading, and as usual I threw myself into it and read everything that came into my hands. I began to study technical market analysis since I quickly understood that I would never know more about the markets than people who were on site, closely following events every second of the day. The human psychology fascinated me, and I soon realized there are people who claim it is possible to outwit these markets, based on trends and cycles. In other words, some claim it is possible to predict future trends, based on knowledge of the past. I was hooked and had to be taught a few humiliating lessons to realize that I didn't know enough. The most effective of these lessons came when I thought was doing a perfect day trading in cotton, sitting outside a supermarket in Lierbyen; I felt like a hotshot, but ended up buying the highest tick of the day and selling out at the very lowest. By definition it cannot get any worse than that. I made up my mind then and there to learn more. Soon after I discovered my luminary in market analysis: William D. Gann.

Gann was a legendary trader who died in the mid-1900's. He was The Man. Some of his methods went beyond everything else in existence, and of course he left behind huge sums when he died. He wrote letters giving advice about shares and sent them to subscribers. These letters still exist. Anyone can check that in 1928, the year before the great Wall Street crash, he predicted accurately that the stock exchange would reach its peak on September 3rd 1929. He was right about the date and the peak, down almost to the last decimal. He had a method for analysing the market which no-one else has been to replicate, neither in his lifetime nor since. He bases it on cycle analysis and he can see the pulse and rhythm of the market. When I found Gann, I thought: yes! I'm going to get into this.

I began to study Gann in depth, but this is not done easily I realized, because he never revealed his deeper secrets. Some, he gave us, but not all. But he described the secret parts of his method of foreknowledge, he says, in this book:



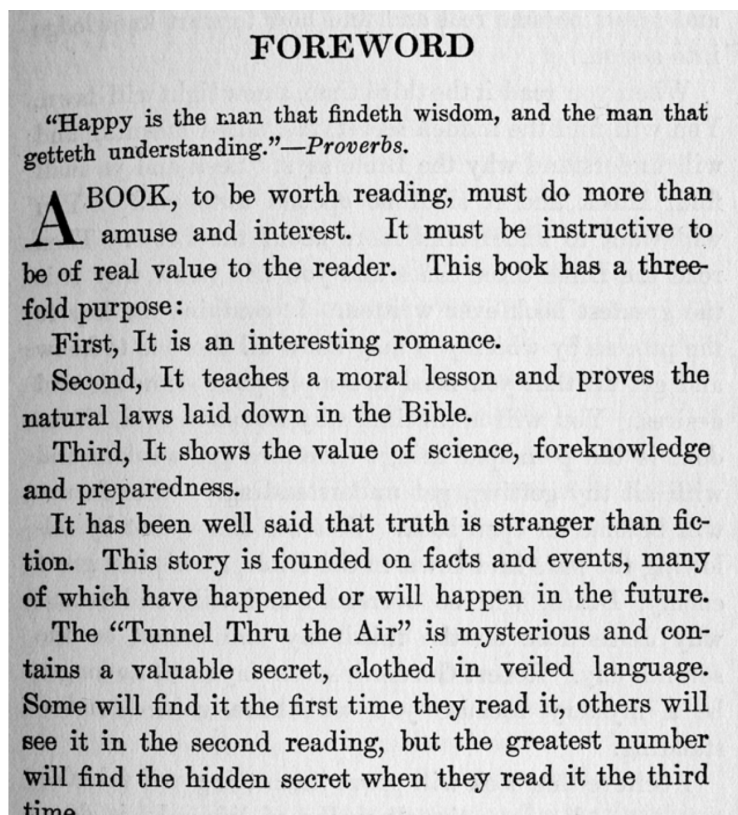
Reproduced by permission from Lambert-Gann Publishing. <http://www.wdgann.com>

As Amundsen says this, he lifts up a book from the pile on the table. He holds it up and shows it to me. The title is *The Tunnel Thru the Air*.

It is kind of a prophetic novel, which Gann published in 1927, Amundsen continues. For example, Gann wrote about how the wheat market would behave, and if you draw a graph based on his Tunnel predictions, and another one for the actual market performance in the same period, it is unbelievable. It truly challenges what you would think is possible. He also wrote that the years from 1940-44 would be a tough time for America and describes Japanese planes flying over the US and dropping bombs.

Are we talking about rational phenomena here, or the supernatural?

These are the tools Gann used to earn money, so I would say it's rational. The point is, at any rate, that I decided to learn how Gann could do what he did. The book I have is a first edition, and its dustcover contains details which are really helpful if you're going to get to the bottom of this. I realised that in time. In his book, which is a novel, Gann writes in the foreword that his book has a hidden meaning and has to be read several times before it can be understood.



Reproduced by permission from Lambert-Gann Publishing: <http://www.wdgann.com>

The book makes several references to the Bible. And, by the way, Gann was also a Freemason. I read the book, but didn't understand very much. I read it again and studied it more closely and got a few hints from people who had heard what others had heard, and so on. Gradually one or two things stood out as possibilities. Suddenly I had a breakthrough. Something which had previously been a mystery suddenly became clear and I wrote an article in an American trading magazine about what I had found. I invited others to form a working party to decode the book.

In other words, no-one has managed to crack the book since 1927?

Some claim to have succeeded, and some have done things similar to Gann, predicting movements on the market and getting rich, etc., but I still believe they have only understood part of his message. However, I received five responses to my article, and as a working party-of-five we sent faxes to each other about Gann's unsolved mysteries. In time, we began communicating via e-mails, and by now we have exchanged thousands of messages about this book. We've read the book forwards, backwards and upside down. Gann hid his message in a kind of cipher known as steganography.

Steganography (stegănŏ'grăfi). *Obs. exc. Hist.* [ad. mod.L. *steganographia* (Trithemius 1500), a. assumed Gr. *στεγανογραφία, f. στεγανό-s covered + γράφ-ειν to write : see -GRAPHY. Cf. F. *stéganographie* (1567 in Hatz.-Darm.).] The art of secret writing; cryptography. Also, cryptographic script, cipher.

Oxford English Dictionary - 1933

Steganography means hiding codes in such a way that you cannot find them unless you search actively. From the outside, Gann's book looks like a normal novel with a normal plot.

One of the places in the book which set me on the trail of what we're going to discuss now is on page 126: "Lord Bacon, the literary genius and philosopher lifted the Bible one day above his head and said: There God speaks".

This is rubbish. Francis Bacon is not known to have done this. The same applies to "the literary genius". Bacon was a statesman and a philosopher, but has never been considered a literary genius, even if he wrote sublime essays. Somewhere else, Gann mentions Shakespeare as a literary genius. I learnt that Gann was befriended with a guy called Manly P. Hall, who wrote books about esoteric subjects. Hall thought that Bacon was Shakespeare and also wrote about Bacon's system of codes in detail. In other words, there was a chance there might be something here worth exploring, and after we had scanned the book, and ran a search, we discovered that the word 'code' is mentioned twice, on pages 238 and 283 respectively, and for someone like me these jumbled page numbers are a suggestion that there may be something to examine more closely here.

To date, we have come a long way towards understanding this book, but our work is yet not complete and there are things I cannot go into at this juncture. The point is, though, that when I began to study Bacon's codes, my interest shifted from Gann to Bacon.

One checking question here might be to ask you why you aren't stinking rich today.

Probably because I haven't solved the puzzle. Not yet. But, well, over to Bacon and his codes.

Amundsen produces a piece of paper copied from a book about codes and shows me Bacon's system. He tells me it is a five-bit system with two variables. 'Five-bit' simply means that every symbol, in this case letters, is normally constituted by five 'binary digits' or bits. Here letter-types 'A' and 'B' are used in lieu of digits.

An Example of a Bi-literarie Alphabet.

Aaaaa aaaab. aaaba. aaabb. aabaa. aabab.
G H I K L M
aabba aabbb abaaa. abaab. ababa. ababb.
N O P Q R S
abbba. abbab. abbbb. baaaa. baaab.
T V W X Y Z
baaba. baabb. babaa. babab. babba. babbb.

Bacon: *The Advancement of Learning* (1640)

You'll have to explain that again.

As I said, I wasn't in the least bit interested in Bacon or Shakespeare when I started at this. Remember that. I had to examine it in the same way as I had to examine hundreds of other leads. I read up on Bacon, and so far have not found any references to him raising the Bible over his head and saying "There God speaks". Put another way, this apparent lack of historicity makes it stand out. There is something about it. I knew I would have to come to terms with Bacon's world of ciphers. I searched everywhere for material and eventually found a book entitled *The Cipher in the Plays and on the Tombstone*, written by Ignatius Donnelly, published in 1899. This writer has constructed a whole system around Shakespeare and Bacon, about codes hither and thither, and it is very unlikely it is correct. I do not want to be associated with Donnelly. I think he's muddying the waters. He presented a number of unsubstantiated claims, but, and it is an important 'but' for me, he begins this book with this poem found in Stratford-upon-Avon:

**GOOD FREND FOR IESUS SAKE FORBEARE
TO DIGG TE DUST ENCLOSED HE. RE.
BLESE BE TE MAN Y SPARES TES STONES
AND CURST BE HE Y MOVES MY BONES.**

It's the epitaph, the inscription on Shakespeare's tombstone. Donnelly also discusses something a Mr. Hugh Black wrote in the *North American Review* in 1887. Naturally I got hold of a copy of the *North American Review*.

So you're doing this to get to the bottom of the W. D. Gann conundrum and not because you're suddenly hooked on another puzzle?

Absolutely. By this time I am well into Gann and do all I can to wrest the ciphers from him. I get it into my head that I have to teach myself Bacon's codes in order to understand Gann, and to

learn Bacon's codes I have to read Donnelly and the 1877 North American Review and loads of other books and journals.

At first, I understood nothing of all the 'A's and 'B's. I couldn't make head or tail of it. But there is an important misprint in Donnelly's book that I did not know at that stage, and afterall I got hold of this book to learn more about Bacon's codes, so I decided I would simply have to go over his solutions once more. It was actually a lucky move, for I could have disregarded the misprint which helped me to solve the code on my own.

You see, Shakespeare's original epitaph is written in a mixture of upper and lower case letters, in an apparently irrational pattern, but if you make groups of five letters to represent one letter according to Bacon's code, you get the following set of letters:

of possible combinations is thirty-two, and the number used in the alphabet only twenty-four. Referring to the alphabet, the twenty-two groups are found to stand for the following twenty-two letters:

S	A	E	H	R
B	A	Y	E	E
R	E	T	A	X
R	A	W	A	R

I. Donnelly: The Cipher in the Plays and on the Tombstone (1899) p. 10.

Where Donnelly in the third line found an 'E', I discovered it should actually be an 'F'. And in this particular place the difference between an 'E' and an 'F' is very important. Donnelly says that the letters of Shakespeare's name appear in front of you if you decode his epitaph with Bacon's system. But what he missed, because he took an 'E' instead of an 'F', is that four letters from Francis Bacon's name -FR BA- also turn up in a similar grouping, giving us the first two letters of each name. Since no-one had written about this, I wondered if this might be the beginning of something. I don't believe in felicitous coincidences. At least, not until the contrary has been proved. Everything must be pursued until it safely can be eliminated.

So, what I found is nothing less than the initials of *the person who designed this code*, as well as the name of the deceased, or what is left of him, lying under the stone the epitaph is engraved on. It tickles my imagination.

At this point I knew very little about Francis Bacon and had superficial knowledge of Shakespeare. I had seen a few films based on his plays and had been to the ballet, *The Tempest*. That's all. But with the experience I now had under the belt, with Bacon's code, I easily solved the rest of the epitaph, I will assert, and what I found there made me immediately put Gann's book aside. I haven't looked back.

But what about Hugh Black of the North American Review? Didn't he get as far you did?

His beginnings were propitious, but then he made a terrible howler, which consequence has been that posterity has rendered him harmless and ridiculous. He has only got himself to thank, having produced an interpretation without support in reason. He discovered the letters of Shakespeare's name alright, but when he wasn't quite sure how to move on, he took a huge risk and arrived at the 'solution' that the full string should be 'FRA BA WRT EAR AY', which in his creative mind became: 'Francis Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays'. From there gravity took over.

I mean, with the letters he produced you can practically construct whatever you want if you are generous enough to allow EAR to signify Shakespeare. And when you should know that there are people sitting around waiting to be able to pound you, this wasn't the smartest of manoeuvres. He served them his own head on a silver platter. Exit Hugh Black.

Nevertheless, Donnelly picked up on it 12 years later?

Yes, he did. Donnelly had his own twist on it. But he made it all too complicated. My solution, on the other hand, is rather straightforward in comparison. It not only solves the cipher on the epitaph, but it also establishes a connecting bridge between Shakespeare's gravestone-cipher and his works. If such a link didn't exist you could reasonably object that the stone had been engraved by someone who wanted to play a trick on history. But when you realize that there needs must be some kind of correspondence between the person who constructed the code and the publishers of the First Folio of Shakespeare's collected works in 1623, it becomes interesting.

So, at some point, your focus on Gann shifted to Shakespeare?

Right. It was January 3rd, 2002. This date was when I cracked the epitaph cipher and, as I said, put Gann aside.

Had no-one cracked it before you?

No. No-one as far as I know. At least, no-one has written about it.

It's a redeeming feature for a sceptic like me that you were looking for something else when you discovered this.

I imagine it is.

But what about the gravestone itself? Does it exist? Can I visit it?

The funeral was solemnized on the following Thursday, April the 25th, 1616, when all that was mortal of the great dramatist was consigned to its final resting-place in the beautiful parish church of his native town. His remains were deposited in the chancel, the selection of that locality for the interment being due to the circumstance of its then being the legal and customary burial-place of the owners of the tithes.

The grave is situated near the northern wall of the chancel, within a few paces of the ancient charnel-house, the arch of the door-way that opened to the latter, with its antique corbels, still remaining. The sepulchre was covered with a slab, that bore the following inscription,—

Good friend, for Jesus sake forbear
To dig the dust inclosed here;
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones.

No, I am afraid not. And that's a shame, of course, but the vandalism is well documented. Halliwell-Phillipps, among others, refers to the original stone in 1882, and laments that it was later exchanged for the one there today.

And Halliwell-Phillipps continues, with regard to the stone:

174

OUTLINES.

had, by the middle of the last century, sank below the level of the floor, and, about fifty years ago, had become so much decayed as to suggest a vandalic order for its removal, and, in its stead, to place a new slab, one which marks certainly the locality of Shakespeare's grave and continues the record of the farewell lines, but indicates nothing more. The original memorial has wandered from its allotted station no one can tell whither,—a sacrifice to the insane worship of prosaic neatness, that mischievous demon whose votaries have practically destroyed so many of the priceless relics of ancient England and her gifted sons.

I assume it was replaced around 1825.

A man called Charles Knight wrote a biography of Shakespeare upon having travelled around in England trying to document whatever he could. He copied the original stone. Shortly thereafter the stone disappeared.

Is this controversial? Are there no Shakespearean scholars who doubt the authenticity of the inscription?

No, not as far as I know. What I would like to stress is that both Phillipps and Knight were hard-core traditionalists. They wouldn't have liked the idea that they could ignite speculation about Shakespeare's authorship. If Knight had known that his written copy of the stone would have been grist to the mill for the Baconians in coming centuries, I assume he would have been pretty upset.

This is the background. And the beginning.

Baconian, *a.* and *sb.* Add: **2.** In modern times used with reference to the theory that Francis Bacon wrote the plays attributed to Shakespeare. - Also **Baconianism**.

1874 *N.Y. Herald* 19 Sept. 11/2 This Baconian theory necessitates a compact and agreement between William Shakespeare and Lord Bacon. *Ibid.* 11/3 It appears to me that considerable blank ammunition has been wasted in this ridiculous war between the Baconians and the Shakespearians. **1884** W. H. WYMAN *Bibliogr. Bacon-Shakes. Controversy* 27 Judge Holmes is the apostle of Baconianism. **1904** *Daily Chron.* 14 Jan. 3/2 If Baconianism had no more cogent evidence to encounter, the game would be in its hands. Since Bacon, on the Baconian hypothesis, certainly broke all other records, why not this one as well? **1904** GARNETT *Eng. Lit.* II. 201 Baconians talk as if Bacon had nothing to do but to write his play at his chambers and send it to his factotum, Shakespeare, at the other end of the town. **1952** AUDEN *Notes* 47 Lovers of small numbers go benignly potty, . . . are Millerites, Baconians, Flat-Earth-Men.

Oxford English Dictionary Supplement I A-G (1972)

Second meeting.

Two months later I meet with Petter again.

This time, in his brand new apartment in one of the many newly erected buildings on Voksenkollen. He has a view of Oslo and the fields at his feet, but when I comment on how pleasant it seems, it emerges that he has both bought the flat and sold it again since we last met. He is slightly reticent about explaining why. Fair enough. He undoubtedly has his reasons. And this book is not about that, anyway.

A debate has flared up in a national newspaper about who Shakespeare was, or wasn't. The reason is that someone was unfortunate enough to refer to the book *The Truth Will Out*, which came out in the fall of 2005, where it was professed that it was Sir Henry Neville who masterminded Shakespeare's works. Literature scholars and experts on history want to put this debate to rest for ever. They appear to cling to the statement that Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare, and anyone who says anything different has an infantile craving for conspiracy theories, and does not actually know what they are talking about.

Petter has also had a couple of articles printed. He writes that we should be allowed to keep the mystery surrounding Shakespeare for lack of evidence. His works will not become less brilliant or valuable for all that. Another correspondent writes that there are probably several hundred people around the world penning books intended to prove that Shakespeare didn't write Shakespeare's works, and if we are to be convinced, they will have to present considerably more material than was in the book about Neville.

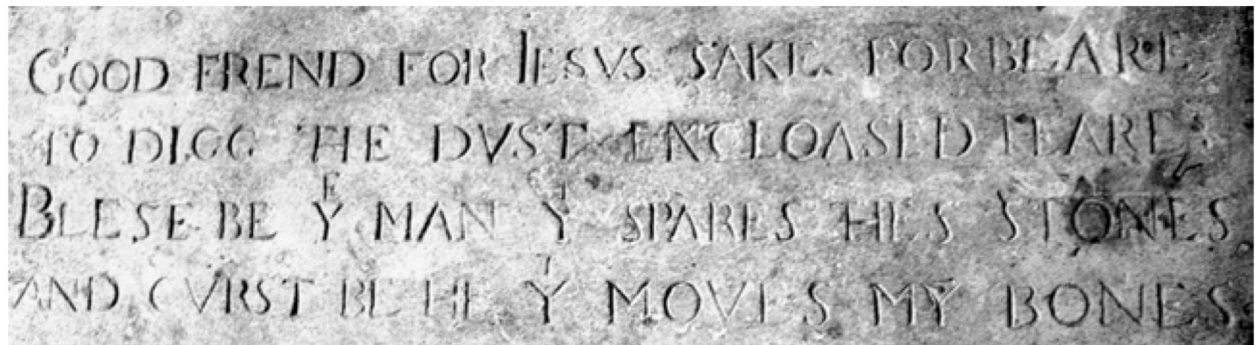
And so the obvious question is:

Can you add anything to the Shakespeareana, Petter Amundsen? Will it hold water? Or are both you and I making a laughing stock of ourselves by writing this book?

I have a lot to add, Petter says.

So far we have only scratched the surface. The so-called experts always give conflicting accounts. Some have it that it was an unschooled genius who wrote the plays, while others argue that the Grammar School in Stratford in fact set very high standards, and this is why Shakespeare apparently knew so much about the world and history, and what have you. My point is that we simply know too little to conclude. Still, there are some people who voice that it should be next to illegal to speculate about alternative authors. Most scholars admit that few things are certain, but they still feel that the question of authorship is so clear that speculation should cease. I find it entertaining that the debate is alive and kicking and stirs so much emotional guesswork from a variety of quarters.

Be attentive, Amundsen says, as he rolls out a scrolled copy of the epitaph on Shakespeare's grave the way it looks today. It is a rubbing in natural size that was made by pressing a large piece of paper against the stone and running over it with a charcoal stick.



The original gravestone was replaced with this one some time in the 1820's, according to my estimate. The old one was badly worn and had sunk beneath ground level, and the idea probably was to restore the grave and return it to its former glory. Shakespeare was enjoying a renaissance at the time.

I will now give you an account of what happened at the beginning of 2002 when I was trying to understand the stenographic code. As I already mentioned, there was an error in Ignatius Donnelly's book, an 'E' where there should have been an 'F'.

In Hugh Black's article in the North American Review the original cipher solution has been reproduced without any errors. I know that now, but I didn't own the North American Review at the time. Donnelly's book begins by referring to Black's article and reproducing the epitaph as it originally was, before it was replaced in the 1820's. When I realised that there was a mistake, things began opening up to me. In order to explain that, I will have to inform you a bit more about Bacon's system of codes.

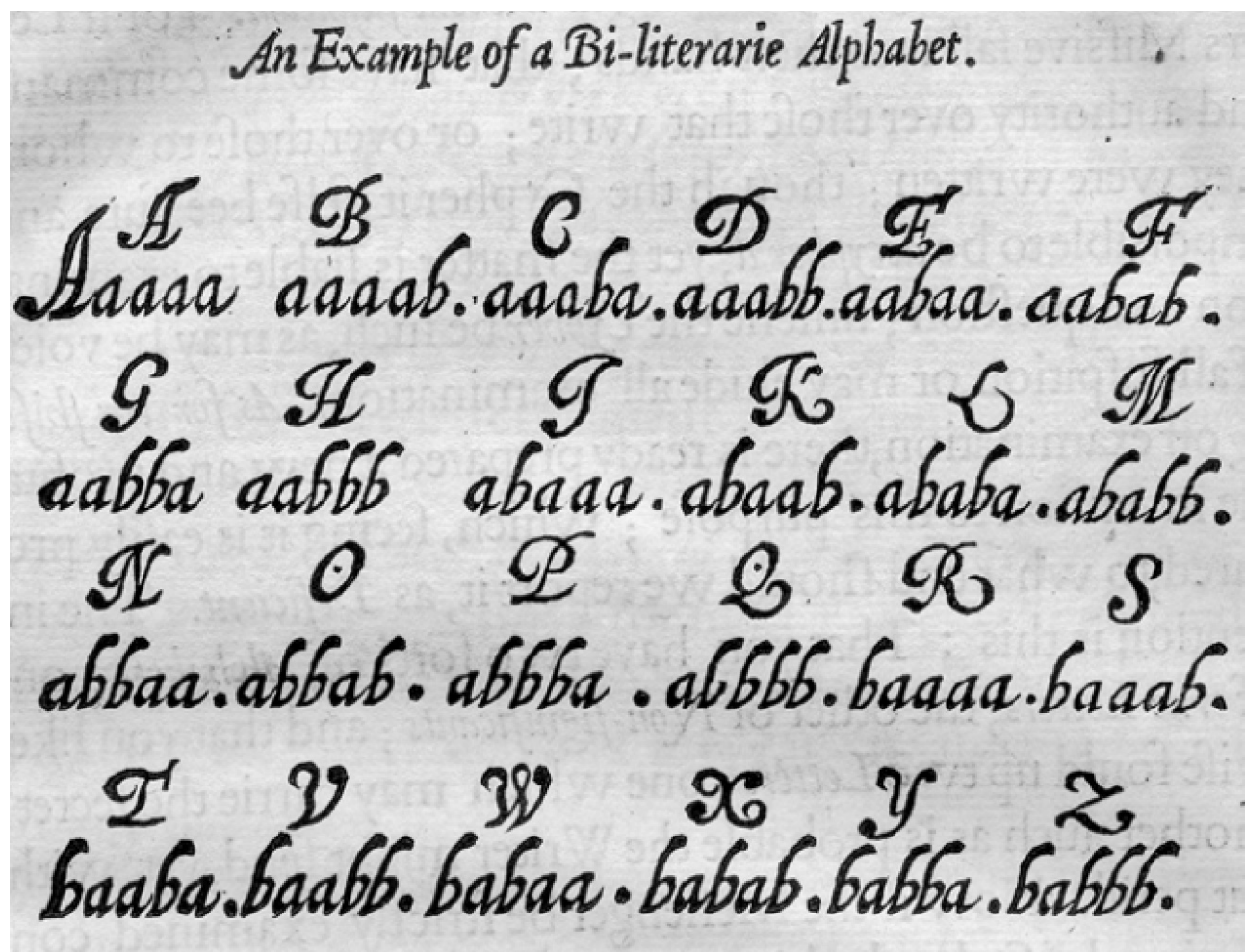
You would be correct in saying that what we have here is an early version of the binary system, used today in computers. It employs two variables as well. It is common knowledge that computers use 1's and 0's, and Bacon used two different letter types from two separate alphabets. These letter groups were designated type 'A' and type 'B', respectively. He describes the method from page 277, a number we come back to, onwards in *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, published in Latin in 1623. Incidentally, this is the same year the First Folio comes out.

In 1640, 14 years following Bacon's death, the first English version of the same book appeared in shop windows along Paternoster Road. In his book Bacon reports that it was during his stay in France, as a boy, he invented the cipher system that he thought valuable enough to warrant publishing. He must have been proud of his invention.

terior Letter. But that jealousies may be taken away, we will annexe an other invention, which, in truth, we devised in our youth, when we were at *Paris*: and is a thing that yet seemeth to us not worthy to be lost. It containeth the *highest degree of Cypher*, which is to signifie *omnia per omnia*, yet so as the *writing infolding*, may beare a quintuple proportion to the *writing infolded*; no other condition or restriction whatsoever is required. It shall be performed thus: First let all the Letters of the *Alphabet*; by transposition, be resolved into two Letters onely; for the transposition of two Letters by five placements will be sufficient for 32. Differences, much more for 24. which is the number of the *Alphabet*. The example of such an *Alphabet* is on this wise.

He had designed an alphabet which represented the 24 letters of the Latin alphabet of the time. In fact, there were 26 letters, but 'I' and 'J' were interchangeable and the same was true of 'U' and 'V'.

This is an example of Bacon's code:



By assigning these 'A's and 'B's into groups of *five* letters each, these groups each represent *one* letter in the plaintext alphabet. Bacon had 32 variables, but only used 24, the number of letters in the period alphabet.

aaaaa is A
aaaab is B
aaaba is C
aaabb is D

and so on. There is an unfailing logic to this. Anyone with the same idea could have constructed the system in a similar way. Bacon then made sentences with these two alphabets, taking letters from the two different alphabets to encode messages.

For example, the name *Erlend* can be concealed in a message of at least 30 letters since the name has six letters (six times five), each of which has to be encoded with a group of five-type 'A' or 'B' letters. To do accomplish the task the encipherer will make use of two chosen sets of letters, two complete alphabets of different type. The space between the five-bits are omitted, of course. When we write words we always include space between them, and we can't restrict ourselves to using only words of five letters.

So, if you want to conceal ERLEND, you can do it like this: I have chosen to italicise the 'B' types. Even then, it is not that easy to spot the code:

Bi/lys mother gave himm four pounds

As a decoder, you first have to define the 'a' and 'b' types, and then divide these up into five-bits. Pure gobblydegook.

Bi/ly smoth ergav ehimm fourp ounds

Then you just read from the table above:

aabaa baaaa ababa aabaa abbaa aaabb

E R L E N D

What gives it away is 'himm'. The extra 'm' is there because I needed another letter, and that would probably make the observant reader reflect on correct English spelling. Deliberate errors can be a handy indicator when you're cracking codes.

Since Bacon's five-bit system has 32 possibilities and there are only 24 letters in the alphabet, this means that there are *eight* vacant variables which do not represent any letters at all. The last valid letter in the alphabet is 'Z', which Bacon represented as *babbb*. If you were to add a 27th letter, logically it follows that it would have been *bbaaa*, but there is no such five-bit group in the sentence I just constructed. Neither is it in the epitaph, as we shall see. Not a single one of the 22 groups of five extracted from the epitaph begins *bb*. This is a strong indication that we are on the right track in our assumption that the epitaph is in code. Keep this in mind as we go on.

During my studies of codes I kept coming across references to this bi-literary (two-letter) alphabet, but I didn't fully understand what it referred to, so I had to go back a few steps to work it out. When I read Donnelly's account of Hugh Black's work as it appeared in the North American Review, the penny began to drop. You see, Black refers to the original epitaph as reproduced in Charles Knight's book. Contrary to the modern stone, the text has upper and lower case letters, seemingly in no rational order.

GOOD FRENDE FOR JESUS SAKE FORBEARE
TO DIGG T—E DUST ENCLOAsED HE.RE.
BLESE BE T—E MAN $\frac{T}{Y}$ SPARES T—Es STONES
AND CURST BE HE $\frac{T}{Y}$ MOVES MY BONES.

Charles Knight: Shaksper (1843), vol II, p. 535.

Black speculated that letter size would be a perfect way of making a distinction between two different types of letters. You won't immediately know, however, whether the big or the small letters are the 'A'-type. You need to experiment. Any less-than-obvious letter separation system would require a key, a table, and we don't possess such a table. Gravestones usually don't come with an interpreter's manual, so we have to grope our way forwards.

Hugh Black, who must have been endowed with fine instincts, assumed that the conspicuous manner of using upper and lower case font served a cryptographic purpose. He naturally thought it was Bacon's cipher system, with its two variables, being in use. The simplest method is often the best, and, as said, Black speculated the capitals to be the 'A' type and the normal size the 'B' type. The opposite would soon produce a bb-group. So he put Shakespeare's epitaph into a table replacing the capital letters with B and the others with A. Then he divided them into groups of five and assigned each group a position on the line that *completed* each five-bit group since the number of letters on each line are not divisible by five.

The table ended up looking as follows:

```
baaab aaaaa aabaa aabbb aaaaa  
aaaab aaaaa babba aabaa aabaa abbba  
baaaa aabab baaba aaaaa babab aaaaa  
baaaa aaaaa babaa aaaaa baaaa
```

There are several things worth noticing here. First of all, the table consists of 28 'B's and 82 'A's, promoting the association of possible reversal. Number 28 is not only inverted to make 82, it is also one of the few numbers the great Greek mathematician Pythagoras called *perfect numbers*, since the sum of its factors make the number itself. (The factors of 28 are: 14, 7, 4, 2, 1.) Factors are integers which can be multiplied to make the number. Thus the relationship between A's and B's is kind of elegant.

Secondly, all the letters divide effortlessly into groups of five - there are no left-overs. This may, of course, be chance since the odds of this happening are merely a 1:5 ratio.

And third, *none of the groups starts with bb*. Did you get this? A single bb-group would have torpedoed any ideas of Bacon code based on letter type since the alphabet only had 24 letters. Combinations starting with bb represent the possibilities between place 24 and place 32 - those without any letter assigned to it. This implies that the odds that we are not dealing with a genuine cipher increase enormously (1:2,803) and the whole thing suddenly becomes more interesting.

The next step, following Black, is to use Bacon's table and replace each of the five-bits with letters. The result is as follows:

SAEHR
BAYEEP
RFTAXA
RAWAR

Notice the nice symmetry of the last line. RAWAR can be read in both directions, almost like a kind of allusion to the inversion of the 28 and 82 I just highlighted.

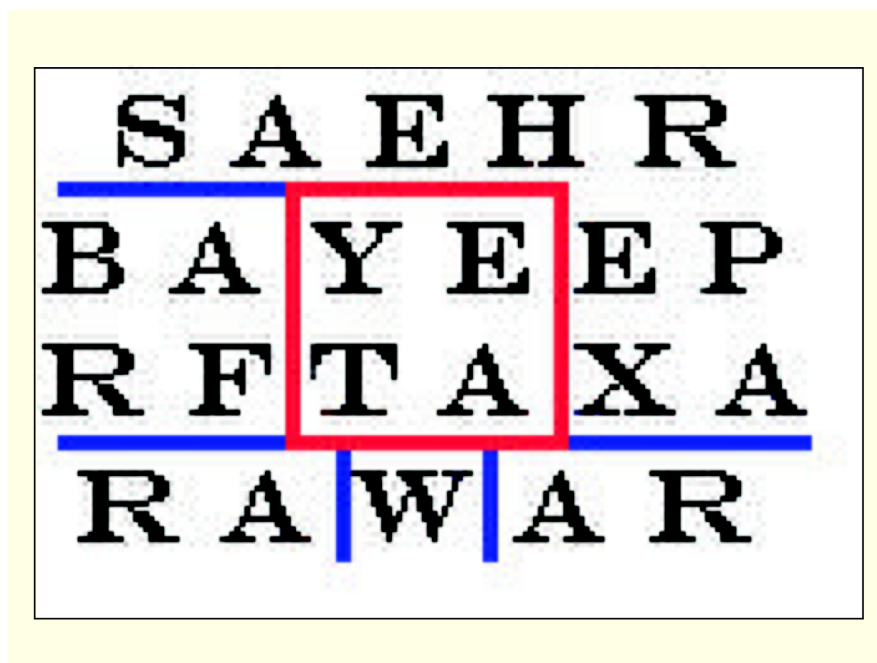
I can see letters alright, but I don't see anything about Bacon or Shakespeare, do you?

You have a most valid point. It could have said 'Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays' but it doesn't. It would almost have been too good. But Black had no problems spotting the anagram possibility of the letters: S A E H R E P X A. Rearrange these, and you have SHAXPEARE. Remember that 'X' was a normal way of writing 'KS'. On the wall, beneath the Shakespeare bust in Stratford church, the memorial names him SHAKSPEARE. So, the same spelling, missing the normal 'E' following K. There have been several examples of this spelling over the years.

As I mentioned in our last meeting, Black unfortunately used the remaining letters to construct a kind of sentence: FR BA WRT EAR AY which was supposed to read: Francis Bacon wrote Shakespeare's plays. An interpretation which is just begging to be ridiculed.

However, I didn't have Black's original article at this time. I was just following Donnelly's sloppy presentation and fortunately couldn't make sense of it. This is how I discovered that Donnelly's 'E' shouldn't be there, and that was what made the whole difference for me.

The effect became that I paid special attention to the grouping of the letters F R B A, which are the first letters of Francis Bacon's names. And in the last line we also find a possible W for William.



This is a code system Francis Bacon made in his youth, and we use it to decipher Shakespeare's epitaph we're left with the letters W SHAXPEARE and FR BA.

The second line also spells BAYEEP, something that could well be intentional. We will get there. More on this later.

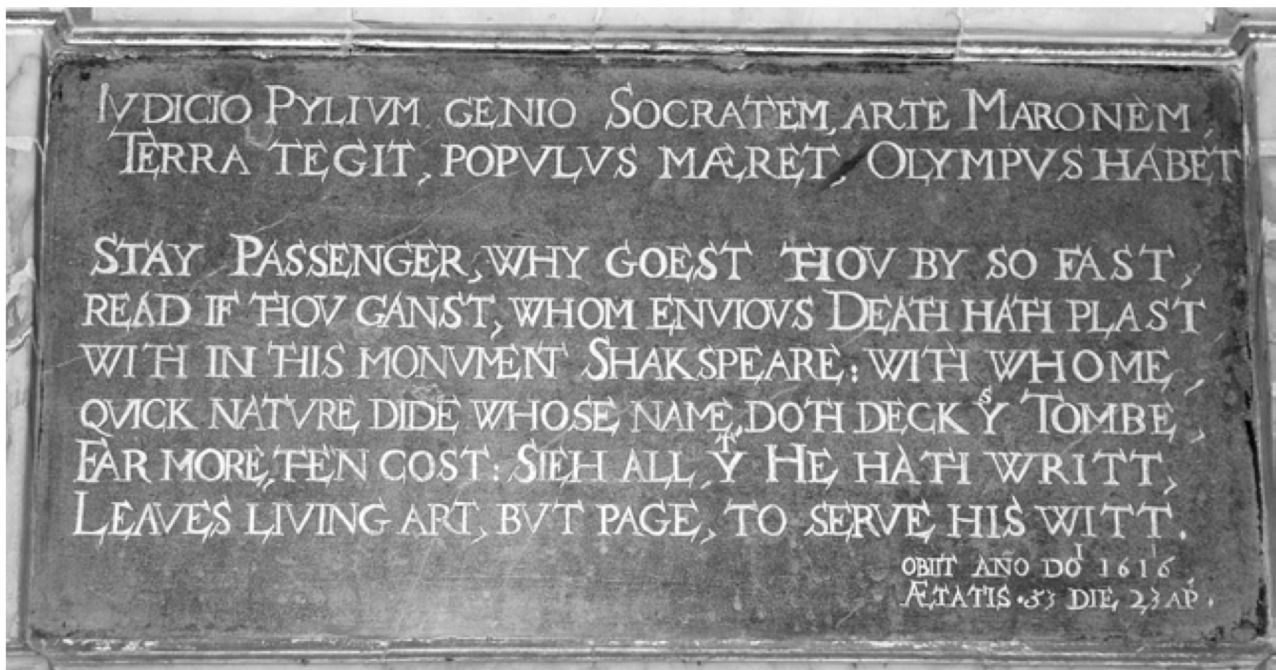
Theoretically, all this can still be dismissed as chance, but it's more than enough to motivate me to continue. I ponder what the point of it could be. I concentrate on the peculiar word, 'EncloAsed', of the epitaph. My thought is this: What is it that has been enclosed? Apart from Shakespeare's bones, I mean? I revert to my table and focus on the letters in the middle:

Y E
T A

These four, left-over letters are surrounded by those giving us the two names/initials. One could therefore claim that Y E T A is indeed 'encloAsed HE.Re'. That the spelling is: 'encloAsed', with a capital 'A' where there shouldn't be any 'a' at all, could be a hint. (If there should be another letter at all, it was acceptable in the 1600s to write 'encloyed'.) The 'A' may suggest that YETA is intended, deduced from looking at the other capitals, symmetrically placed among capitals:

To digg T-E Dust **EncloAsed** HE.Re.
Blese be T-E man **Y** spares **T**-Es Stones

How would we know that this really is Shakespeare's gravestone if tradition hadn't passed it down? I speculate that this uncertainty is intentional; it was meant to make us stop and puzzle. Beneath the nearby poet's plaque on the wall it says: Stay passenger, why goest thou by so fast?



Read IF THOU CANST.

The name 'Shakespeare' does not appear on the grave slab, but if you study it closely, you will see that the first word that really strikes you is 'SAKE'. Two lines down we find 'spares'. We are therefore missing an H in 'SAKE' and an 'E' in 'spares'. Perhaps that is what is also being alluded to in the striking way of writing 'HE.Re'? Normally there would not a full stop in the middle of a word. (Later in the story we will, incidentally, see that 'H' and 'E' become extremely important for our understanding of the complexity of the cipher in Shakespeare's works. Returning to the book at a later date and reading it again will provide many aha's. We generously leave that to the reader.)

Another version of the gravestone gives 'Enclo-Ased', written with a hyphen, which serves no immediate function. We don't know if this was the original form - Knight didn't see the hyphen. Perhaps it was to encourage decoders to make the connection between 'SAKE' and 'spares'?

Another oddity is that the first, three, B-style, letters of 'SAKE' form part of the fourth five-bit, aabbb, which is the missing 'H' of SHAKE. Phonetically speaking, there is a great deal of difference between 'Shake' and 'Sake', but not between 'spare' and 'speare'. Whether this observation has any significance is, of course, open to debate.

This has been a painstaking piece of detective work. Oftentimes it must have been next to impossible to distinguish between what is a real clue and what you just imagine was a clue, wouldn't you say? I suppose you spot clues everywhere, looking through decoder's glasses?

Yeah, this is correct. It's only with the help of time and external checking you can identify what seem to be the real clues, but your objection is not essential for this story. Unless I say so, what I present here has passed a few hurdles.

How can you say that?

Because I see a more complete picture now, and even if the clues weren't really placed there by the writers, they have helped me find my way to the solution.

Having mused for a few minutes on the new table of letters, a hunch told to pursue the idea that YETA was indeed enclosed in the cipher table. Then the next logical step presented itself: to draw a parallel to what is most definitely enclosed in the grave, in other words Shakespeare's DUST, a word which moreover is part of the epitaph text: "To dig the DUST enclosed here".

Y E T A has four letters, as has D U S T, so I thought: what if 'Dust' is the keyword needed for breaking this code?

You may of course counter this is being far fetched, but nevertheless - the logic seemed pretty clear to me, and so I determined to test out what would happen if I took the word 'Dust' and ran with it.

An Internet search for the use of the word 'Dust' in Shakespeare's writing revealed a scene in Hamlet where the young prince has just killed Polonius, Ophelia's father, who was hiding behind an arras. ARRAS reminded me of RAWAR, the curtain-like row of letters beneath YETA. A tilted W is a Sigma - S in Greek.

Anyway. Hamlet managed to hide the body, and when someone asks where he has disposed of Polonius, he answers: "I compounded it with dust". I thought it fitted perfectly, describing the task I was about to perform, so I took it as a kind of confirmation that I was on the right track.

My procedure was as follows: I took the word, DUST, and wrote it underneath the word, YETA. This wasn't just a brainwave, but is a documented modus operandi which follows an old tradition within cryptology and number symbolism. I had seen clear evidence that Bacon was familiar with the concept. In this system letters get value based on where in the alphabet they reside: A=1, B=2 and so on.

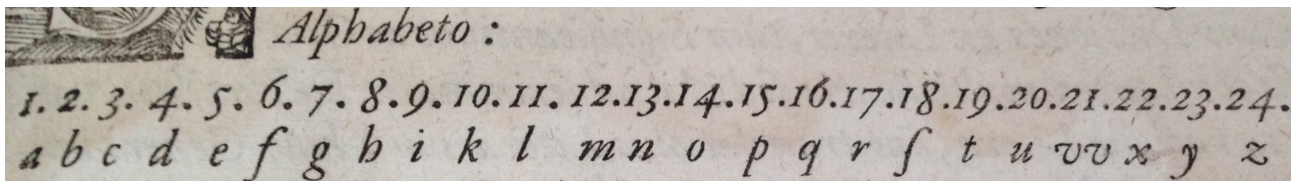
One letter plus another equal a third. $A + B = C$, in the same way as $1 + 2 = 3$.

The evidence for saying Bacon was familiar with letter values can be found in his book, called the Abecedarium, published in the 1600's, a fragment of which was published posthumously, but the complete book was later found, and has recently been published in its entirety by an Oxford man. Bacon writes in this book about the number 67, which he calls 'the threefold Tau' (the third T).

Now. How can 67 be a T? Bacon uses the alphabet cycled several times over. The first T is number 19. Z is the last letter of his alphabet, assigned to number 24. The second A then becomes 25 (24 + 1); the second T is therefore 24 + 19 = 43. The third A is 49: 24 + 24 + 1. This way 67 becomes the third Tau, 48 + 19 = 67.

I set up Yeta and Dust like an arithmetic calculation:

Y + D
E + U
T + S
A + T



The numerical values are:

YETA	23	5	19	1
+ DUST	4	20	18	19
	27	25	37	20
	-24	-24	-24	
= CANV	3	1	13	20

The calculation produced the new letters C A N V. I replaced Y E T A with C A N V in the table:

SAEHR
BACAE P
RFNVXA
RAWAR

A skeptic would probably raise his finger at this point. The "enclosed name" that's appearing is not FR BACON, but FR BACAN, that's if you approve of reading CANV in the same order as you would YETA. But what about the extra V? This was more or less what was rushing through my own mind too, but I couldn't let go. I kept wondering whether this grave slab of Shakespeare had some connection with his writing.

After all, the stone is just that - *a stone*. Anyone could have meddled with it. If, for example, Bacon had wanted to alter the stone, mind you - he was a powerful man until the early 1620's (before he had to admit to taking bribes), it is not that difficult to imagine that he could have had someone tamper with the gravestone if he himself had wanted to take the credit for Shakespeare's writings. So this solution by itself wouldn't prove anything, except that Bacon's code has been used seemingly successfully, and many would have disputed even that, because you can always object that in theory anyone can produce curve-fitted, dramatic results with a pile of letters, inventing some "codes" to fit the purpose.

This objection is not completely invalid, of course. The more letters there are, the more possible interpretations and solutions there are going to be. That's how it is. But it is difficult to explain away the fact that we have used Bacon's own code and found phonetic versions of his own

and Shakespeare's names by exchanging the key word DUST from the epitaph with the enclosed letters YETA. For me, this is too neatly tied in to be written off as chance.

If we add all the numerical values of each line, we can find further support for my conclusion.

Black's version of the table gives the following values:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{S A E H R} &= 18+1+5+8+17 = 49 \\ \text{B A Y E E P} &= 2+1+23+5+5+15 = 51 \\ \text{R F T A X A} &= 17+6+19+1+22+1 = 66 \\ \text{R A W A R} &= 17+1+21+1+17 = 57 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Total} = 223$$

Using DUST instead of YETA the values are:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{S A E H R} &= 18+1+5+8+17 = 49 \\ \text{B A C A E P} &= 2+1+3+1+5+15 = 27 \\ \text{R F N V X A} &= 17+6+13+20+22+1 = 79 \\ \text{R A W A R} &= 17+1+21+1+17 = 57 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Total} = 212$$

The sum of the top and bottom lines, which are unaffected by my change (49 + 57), is 106 in both cases. It is worth noticing that when DUST is replaced by CANV *the sum of the two lines in the middle also becomes 106 (27 + 79).*

This is perfect balance, perfect symmetry.

And the average of each line (212 / 4) is... 53.

These two numbers, 53 and 106, turn out to have huge significance for what is to follow. Those who consider their heads screwed on properly will probably reject most of this as chance, but for me it is beginning to point to something. In cipher work, the way a word sounds is just as important as standardized spelling. There is practically no difference in the pronunciation of 'Bacan' and 'Bacon'. The Oxford English Dictionary gives written, contemporary variants, in no particular order: *bacoun*, *bakoun*, *bacun*, *bakon* and *baken*. Recently I even got seven hits on Google with 'eggs and bacan' and twenty-three with 'bacan sandwich'.

Has the number 106 any significance?

There is something truly special about 106, but I'll return on to this later. What I did when I discovered all this was to check Shakespeare books more closely. Until then, I had limited my observations to the gravestone, and that was exciting enough, but if this is to hold water I need to find a link between the stone and Shakespeare's works. I therefore obtained a facsimile of the First Folio, the collected version of all Shakespeare's plays, dated 1623. To my surprise I stumbled across something on the very first page. Once again it had to do with upper and lower case letters.

All the lines of the poem *To the Reader* begin with capital letters, as all poems and printed verse should in those days. All the lines, that is, *except one*. It is a typographical error. I am wearing my cipher glasses now, and know that one approach to steganography that you wish for someone to intercept is to create deliberate, tell-tale mistakes. It is a way of leading the reader's attention in a particular direction. This typo immediately drew my attention. The misprint, deliberate or not, is in the first letter of the line.

The Greek word describing *the beginning of a line* is *Akrostikon*. An acrostic, first officially used by the Roman writer Ennius, was a method of including an immanent dedication to a person, revealing the author, or something else. Acrostic words are formed by reading the first letter of the line up or down, and sometimes, as we shall see later, in some instances, more than one letter is taken from each line.

The same year that Shakespeare's collected works came out, in the great Folio of 1623, a dictionary was also published by a gentleman by the initials: H.C. The author was not mentioned on the first page, but amongst others there was a poem by Nicholas Smith, prefacing the book:

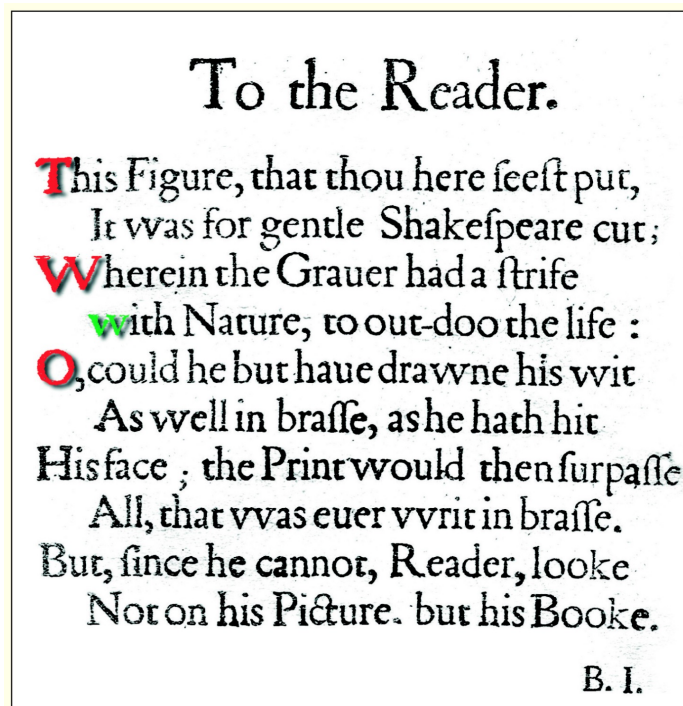
He whose self love, or too ambitious spirit,
Envies or carpes at this thy Muses action,
Nere let him live, or of a Muse once merit
Regard or fame, but die in his detraction,
Irrevocably plagu'd with Zolian spight,
Ere he once taste of Helicons delight.
Could I, oh could I quintessence my skill,
Or with Elixir truly alcumize,
Knowledge with learning should instruct my quill
Effectually to praise thy Muses guise,
Re-felling all the critical disasters,
Among some captious, yet wise seeming masters,
Made by her curious eye, their owne disasters.

The name of the author is thus written acrostically downwards: HENRY COCKERAM, and please note the variant spelling.

Another, similar type of cipher which was in use was the *telestic*, which is the same as an acrostic but the important letter is placed at the *end* of a line.

With these instructions in mind - if you read *To the Reader* now, and think acrostically, what is the first thing that would catch your eye?

TWOHB going down. Unfortunately, that isn't a word I've ever met.



Exactly. But if you only read the first three letters, it becomes more readily comprehensible.

Then that would be TWO.

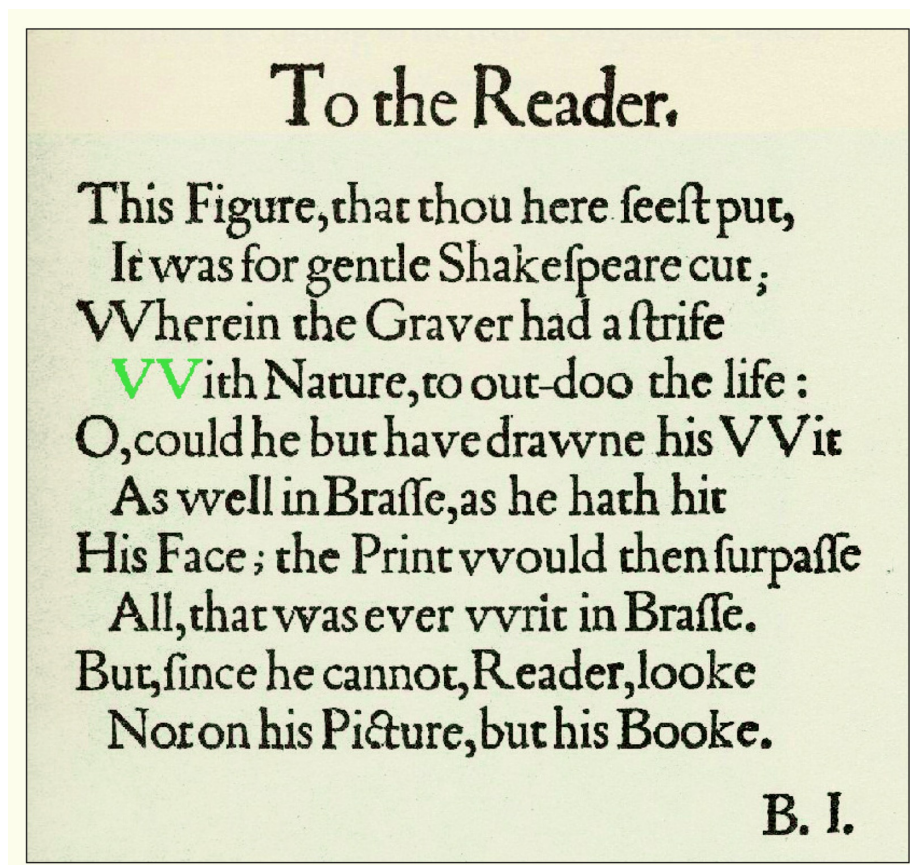
Exactly. A figure. As in *This Figure that thou here seest put*. Nevertheless, we're reading the first page of Shakespeare's Collected Works and already a cipher seems to reveal itself. It is so simple, it seems fanciful. But it's there, no doubt about it - number 2 as an acrostic. It will become apparent that 2 is a pointer to more than just the number itself, but at this stage in the process we are completely unaware of that. So, for the time being, we stick to the number. What shall we do with the number? What does it mean? What is it inviting us to do?

Eeh... To go to page two?

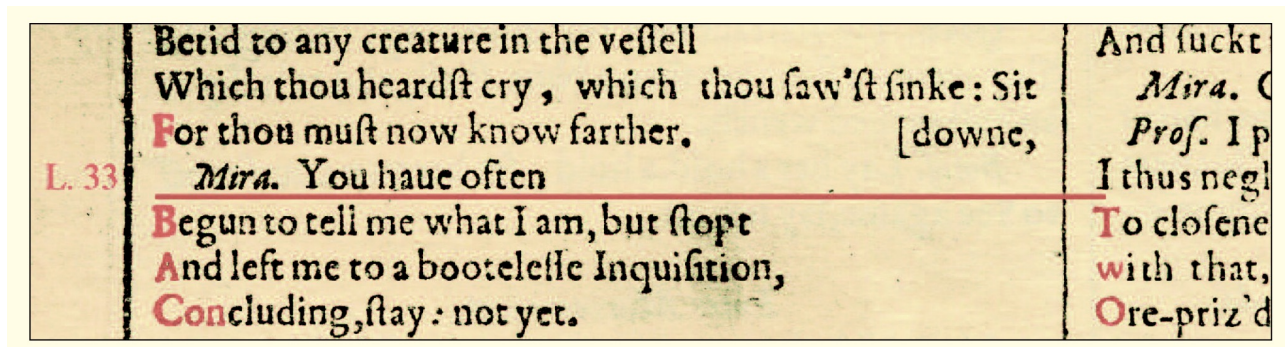
Yes. This was my thought too. Since there aren't any page numbers in the First Folio before the plays commence (the 18 pages of introduction, preface, index etc are not paginated), you encounter the first number 2 on the second page of the first play (which may have been Shakespeare's last) - *The Tempest*. This is in reality page 20.

Lo and behold - in the right-hand column there is a new acrostic: *TwO*, curiously equipped with a small 'w' where the verse form requires a capital letter. This, by the way, also happens in the *To the Reader*, marked in green above. A clear misprint parallel. This is amended in the 2nd Folio as a capital 'W' replaces the small letter in both cases. There are, incidentally, other differences in *To the Reader* in the 2nd Folio. All the capital 'W's have now been written with two 'V's side by side. I think this may be interpreted as a sign that the compositor deliberately used a small 'w' in the First Folio since, if the typo was caused by being short of a capital 'W', he could already have written it with two 'V's. This strengthens my suspicion that the small 'w' was deliberate.

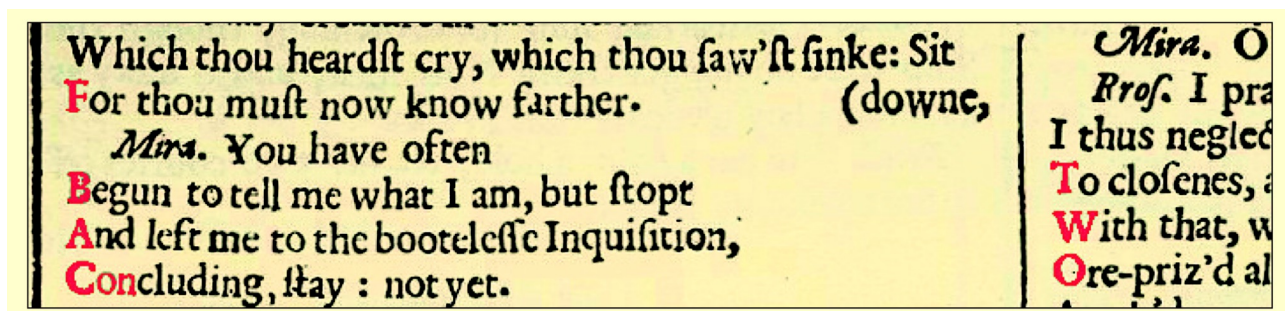
The poem in the 2nd Folio looks as follows:



Studying page 2 of The Tempest, inspecting the TwO acrostic, I stumbled upon something of the highest significance: In the opposite column I found nothing less than an *F BACon* acrostic:



In the 2nd Folio the small 'w' in TwO is corrected to TWO (but the word 'so' at the end of the line has disappeared - not shown here):



I noted that the space between the 'F' and the 'B' in *F BACon* is on line 33 on the page. Also the T in TwO in the next column, to the right of *F BACon*, is found on line 100 of the page. Considering that letters and their numerical values, I knew that the word 'Bacon' has a value of 33. (B=2 + A=1 + C=3 + O=14 + N=13 = 33). 'Francis' has a value of 67, giving 'Francis Bacon' a total value of 100.

Then I spotted something else. Another mistake. Between the word 'how', which should have been capitalised, and the 's' of 'so' in brackets, there are 33 lines. In other words, another possible allusion to Bacon. There seemed to have been a momentum to emphasise number 33.

Prof. 'Tis time
I should informe thee farther: Lend thy hand
And plucke my Magick garment from me: So,
Lye there my Art: wipe thou thine eyes, haue comfort,
The direfull spectacle of the wracke which touch'd
The very vertue of compassion in thee:
I haue with such prouision in mine Art
So safely ordered, that there is no soule
Ne not so much perdition as an hayre
Betid to any creature in the vessell
Which thou heardst cry, which thou saw'st sinke: Sit
For thou must now know farther. [downe,
Mira. You haue often
Begun to tell me what I am, but stopt
And left me to a bootelesse Inquisition,
Concluding, stay: not yet.
Prof. The howr's now come
The very minute byds thee ope thine care,
Obey, and be attentiu. Canst thou remember
A time before we came vnto this Cell?
I doe not thinke thou canst, for then thou was't not
Out three yeeres old.
Mira. Certainly Sir, I can.
Prof. By what? by any other house, or person?
Of any thing the Image, tell me, that
Hath kept with thy remembrance.
Mira. 'Tis farre off:
And rather like a dreame, then an assurance
That my remembrance warrants: Had I not
Fowre, or fife women once, that tended me?
Prof. Thou hadst; and more *Miranda*: But how is it
That this liues in thy minde? What seest thou els
In the dark-backward and Abysme of Time?
Yf thou remembrest ought ere thou cam'st here,
How thou cam'st here thou maist.
Mira. But that I doe not.
Prof. Twelue yere since (*Miranda*) twelue yere since,
Thy father was the Duke of *Millaine* and

Mira. Sir, most neederully.
Prof. Being once perfected how to graunt suites,
how to deny them: who t' aduance, and who
To trash for ouer-topping; new created
The creatures that were mine, I say, or chang'd 'em,
Or els new form'd 'em; hauing both the key,
Of Officer, and office, set all hearts i'th state
To what tune pleas'd his care, that now he was
The Iuy which had hid my princely Trunck,
And suckt my verdure out on't: Thou attend'st not?
Mira. O good Sir, I doe.
Prof. I pray thee marke me:
I thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
To closenes, and the bettering of my mind
with that, which but by being so retir'd
Ore-priz'd all popular rates: in my false brother
Awak'd an euill nature, and my trust
Like a good parent, did beget of him
A falsehood in it's contrarie, as great
As my trust was, which had indeede no limit,
A confidence fans bound. He being thus Lorded,
Not onely with what my reuiew yeilded,
But what my power might els exact. Like one
Who hani'g into truth, by telling of it,
Made such a synner of his memorie
To credite his owne lie, he did belecue
He was indeede the Duke, our o'th' Substitution
And executing th' outward face of Roialtie
With all prerogatiue: hence his Ambition growing:
Do'st thou heare?
Mira. Your tale, Sir, would cure deafenesse.
Prof. To haue no Schreene between this part he plaid,
And him he plaid it for, he needes will be
Absolute *Millaine*, Me (poore man) my Librarie
Was Dukedome large enough: of temporall roalties
He thinks me now incapabl. Confederates
(so drie he was for Sway) with King of *Naples*
To giue him Annuall tribute, doe him homage

Another observation I have made is that the erroneous: w is on line 12, counting from the 'h' in how. And it is 21 lines down to the typo: s (page 2/20 is the only page in *The Tempest* that has such errors). This is interesting geometry which not only alludes to the 12-21 inversion, but is also tied to a figure which we also will discover to have decisive importance as the story progresses. I talk about Pythagoras' famous 3-4-5 triangle. Without digging too much at this stage I would just briefly mention that these three misprints are all connected to this Pythagoras triangle:

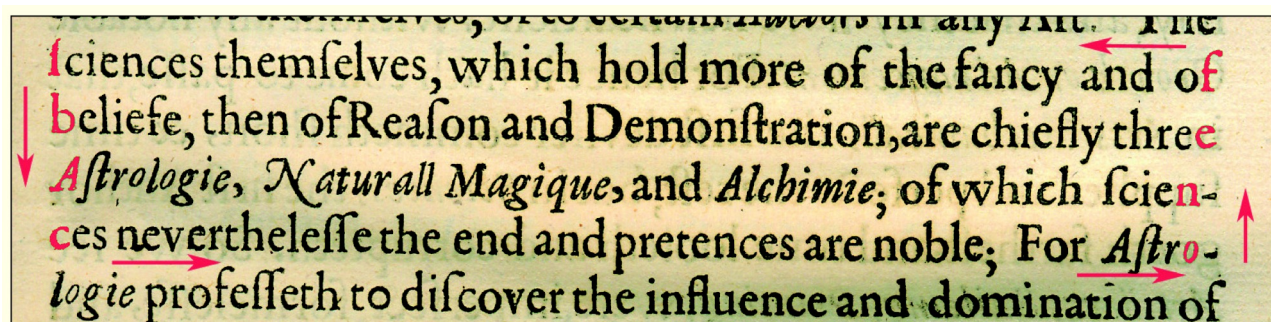
Prof. 'Tis time
I should informe thee farther: Lend thy hand
And plucke my Magick garment from me: So,
Lye there my Art: wipe thou thine eyes, haue comfort,
The direfull spectacle of the wracke which touch'd
The very vertue of compassion in thee:
I haue with such prouision in mine Art
So safely ordered, that there is no soule
Ne not so much perdition as an hayre
Betid to any creature in the vessell
Which thou heardst cry, which thou saw'st sinke: Sit
For thou must now know farther. [downe,
Mira. You haue often
Begun to tell me what I am, but stopt
And left me to a bootelesse Inquisition,
Concluding, stay: not yet.
Prof. The howr's now come
The very minute byds thee ope thine care,
Obey, and be attentiu. Canst thou remember
A time before we came vnto this Cell?
I doe not thinke thou canst, for then thou was't not
Out three yeeres old.
Mira. Certainly Sir, I can.
Prof. By what? by any other house, or person?
Of any thing the Image, tell me, that
Hath kept with thy remembrance.
Mira. 'Tis farre off:
And rather like a dreame, then an assurance
That my remembrance warrants: Had I not
Fowre, or fife women once, that tended me?
Prof. Thou hadst; and more *Miranda*: But how is it
That this liues in thy minde? What seest thou els
In the dark-backward and Abysme of Time?
Yf thou remembrest ought ere thou cam'st here,
How thou cam'st here thou maist.
Mira. But that I doe not.
Prof. Twelue yere since (*Miranda*) twelue yere since,
Thy father was the Duke of *Millaine* and

Mira. Sir, most neederully.
Prof. Being once perfect
how to deny them: who t'
To trash for ouer-topping;
The creatures that were mi
Or els new form'd 'em; ha
Of Officer, and office, set all
To what tune pleas'd his ea
The Iuy which had hid my
And suckt my verdure out
Mira. O good Sir, I do
Prof. I pray thee marke
thus neglecting worldly e
To closenes, and the better
with that, which but by be
Ore-priz'd all popular rate
Awak'd an euill nature, and
like a good parent, did be
A falsehood in it's contrari
As my trust was, which had
A confidence fans bound.
Not onely with what my re
But what my power might
Who hani'g into truth, by
Made such a synner of his m
To credite his owne lie, he
He was indeede the Duke, ou
And executing th' outward
With all prerogatiue: hence
Do'st thou heare?
Mira. Your tale, Sir, we
Prof. To haue no Schreene
And him he plaid it for, he ne
Absolute *Millaine*, Me (po
Was Dukedome large enou
He thinks me now incapabl
(so drie he was for Sway) w
To giue him Annuall tribu

You may examine this on your own when you have time. As a kind of foretaste of what's to come. It does no harm to point out the word 'bootelesse' in the right angle.

(First of all I'll have to go home and digest the fact that I am actually spending time talking to a man who habitually draws geometric shapes on old text specimens. It's exotic, to put it mildly.)

Mostly I took things off the Internet. It wasn't until a later stage that I obtained originals and books in facsimile, or travelled to the British Library to peruse originals, sometimes ordering printouts. Now I have a minor library of my own, but the Internet got me started. As a proud owner of *The Advancement of Learning*, in the 1640 English edition, I chose to inspect page 33 since it is a perfect Baconian and Masonic number. I was both happy and astonished to actually find something similar on that page. A quick study of the text revealed the acrostic: BAC, and on the same three lines, a telestic: ON, and then you have an 'E'. I even saw that it extends into an 'F' and an 'S'. In other words, on the Bacon page, FS BACONE is hidden. It is highly unlikely that this is just a freak accident.



FS BACONE. Bacone is an ablative form of 'Bacon', meaning 'by'. Francis was often written FS:

These are measurable matters. I have, for example, been counting and calculating the probability of certain letters appearing in certain contexts in *The Tempest*, such as Two being situated opposite BACON. Guess what I found.

I give up. Lots?

Based on a counting of letters beginning lines throughout the 19 pages of *The Tempest*, a rough probability calculation makes the odds of these letters occurring naturally 1:2 billion. And since it appears on page 2, you would therefore need to have a supply of two billion similar publications, all different, before probability tells us this acrostic is likely to reappear.

The reason I don't ask you awkward follow-up questions is that I've decided to let you tell the story in the way you see fit. I could have run off to a maths professor this morning to find out whether your probability calculus was correct, but I won't. I'll try and understand what you're saying. Others can do the math.

Sounds good. As you already know, I have no desire to be found wanting. What I theorize must stand in the light of day. Even if I only would have kept it to myself.

Anyway, to progress from here, I chose to examine the frequency of certain key words in Shakespeare's plays. You can run a search on the Net, you can easily find out where they appear, how many times, and so on. The first word I searched for was, of course, 'Bacon'.

The five-letter word 'Bacon' appears twice in a book of close to a million words. But the odd, plural 'Bacons' appears once, a strange choice of a word because 'bacon' is uncountable, but it could be the Bacon family, hence *The Bacons*, whatever. The last variant of the word is 'Bacon-fed'. The two occasions when 'Bacon' appears are on page 53 of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and page 53 of *Henry IV, Part 1*.

An amusing parenthesis is that the numerical value of the word *poet* is 53:

P = 15, O = 14, E = 5, T = 19.

And there is more. One of the two 'Bacon' is found on page 53 in the play entitled *The First part of King Henry IV* (or *1 Henry IV* in short). This play boasts a peculiar feature in the rather striking way that its pages are numbered: 46, 49, 50, 51, 52 and 53. In other words, page-numbers 47 and 48 are missing. They simply do not exist. It might therefore seem as if someone wanted a particular piece of information to appear on page 53, and it was so important for this person that he or they manipulated the page numbers to make it fit.

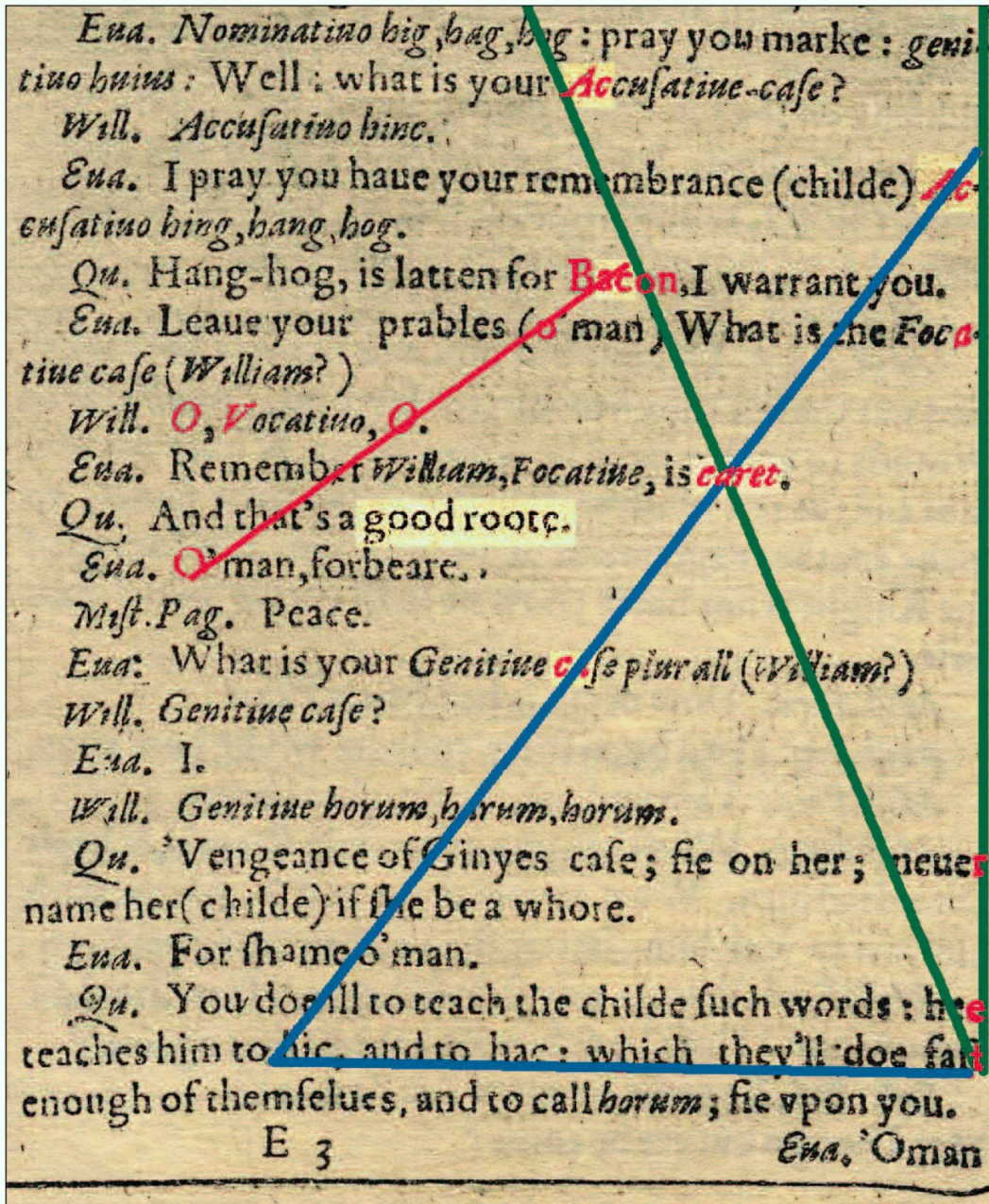
The other occurrence is in context to an anecdote Sir Francis grew up with. A man called Hog was trying to get off a severe sentence in a case over which Nicholas Bacon was presiding, and he did this by saying they had to be kinsmen, Bacon and Hog. Fine, said Bacon, but Hog does not become Bacon until it has been well hanged!

On page 53 in *Merry Wives* it says: "Hang Hog is latten for Bacon". This story did not become public knowledge until long after Francis was dead, roughly in the middle of the 1600s.

Are there possible anomalies in The Merry Wives of Windsor?

Yes, there are. There is a brand new scene printed on page 53. It's first appearance is in the First Folio. It wasn't there in earlier, so-called Quarto editions. No-one has successfully explained how Shakespeare managed to write a new scene when he had been dead for seven years, but in academic Shakespeare editions, such as *The Arden Shakespeare*, it says this scene is not relevant to the development of the plot, but it seems the writer wanted to play with words. The way I see it, this scene was inserted in order to produce the word 'Bacon' on another page 53.

The same page also gives us a lesson in telestics, which is to hide an acrostic message at the end of the line. And also in geometry, which is paramount to this search.



We'll come back to this, but for now let's focus on the word 'Caret', which appears twice in the book, once every 450 pages. It looks as though they have lengthened the lines and managed to finish on letter 'C' exactly where 'Bacon' and 'Caret' are. See also that there is a right-angled triangle between the 'O's and that the hypotenuse is extended to point to AC in 'Bacon'.

This is a glimpse of the all-important geometry. Caret, reversed, is Terac, or Ter Ac. This is Latin for 'three points', like in a triangle. The blue line passes through three AC or CA, ending at HIC, meaning 'here'.

With respect to 1 Henry IV the version is relatively unchanged from earlier editions, but you have to skip two pages to have the word 'Bacon' appear on page 53. However, number 53 has a lot more to it than just that. You'll see in time.

And 53 + 53 make 106.

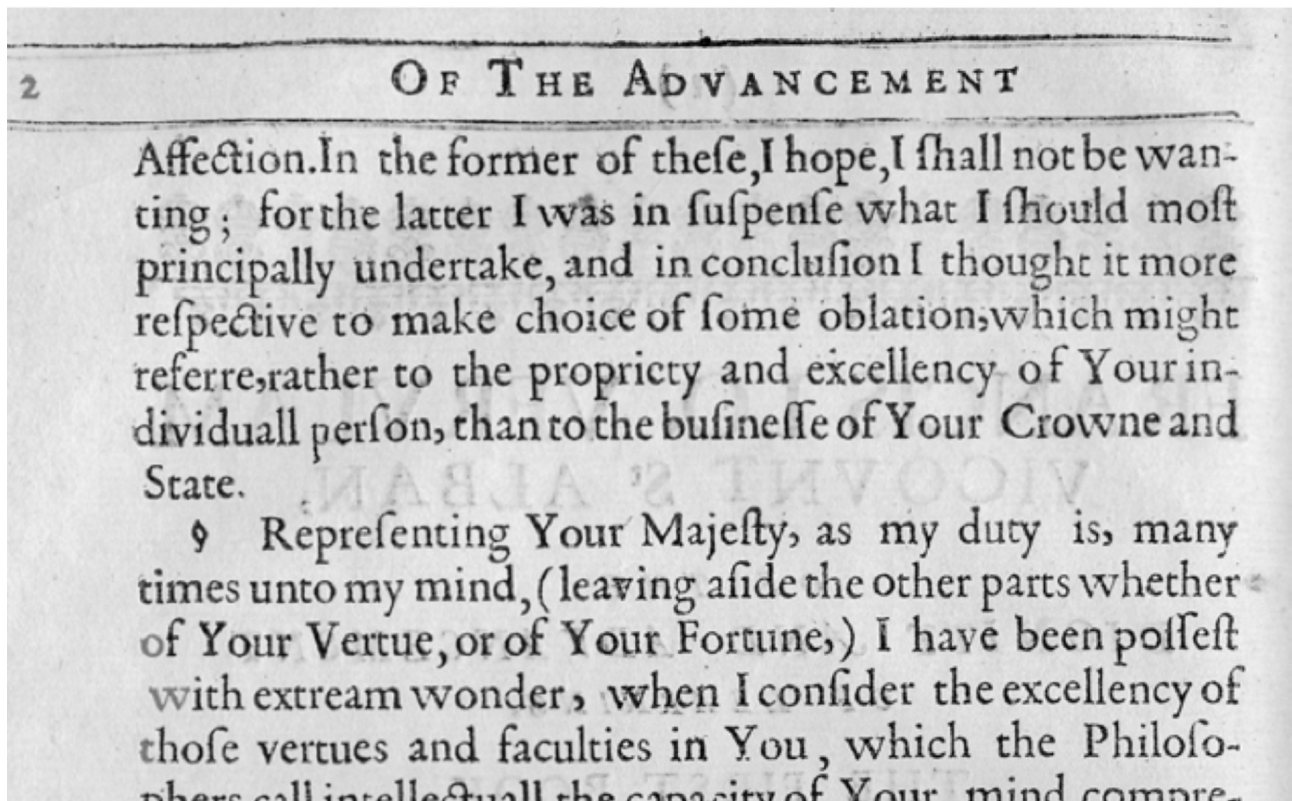
Yes. Like the average numerical value of the four lines in the decoded epitaph is 53.

It must have been hell writing this to make it all fit. If you're right, that is.

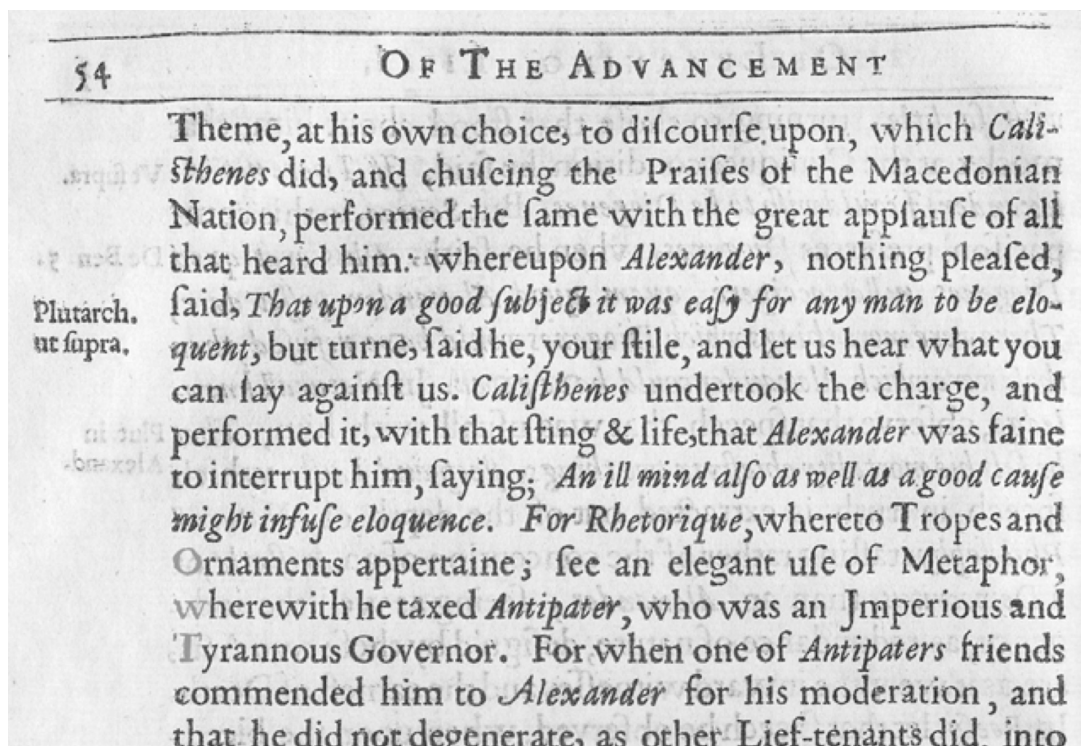
Agreed. I also believe it must have been hell constructing all this. Whether or not I am right will one day be clear. You'll have to wait and see.

But why page 53?

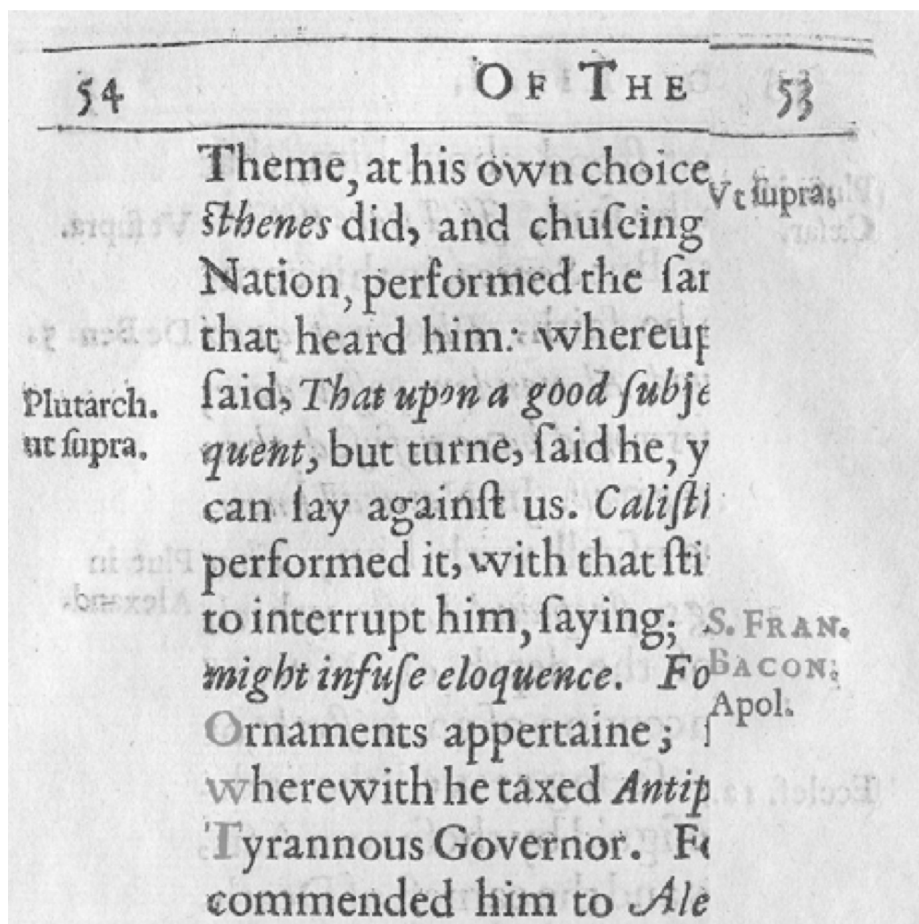
As I said, it's the numerical value of POET, so it could be a way of signalling that. But I didn't really think that much about it. Rightly so, because 53 has another, very special function. But let's not take short cuts. We have to take it step by step. I looked at page 53 of Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning*, but to my disappointment I found nothing. I searched here, there and everywhere. Nothing. But on page 2 I found a TWO acrostic.



Even the 'W' has moved in, for no apparent reason. That's promising, I'd say. The numerical value of TWO is 54. So I turned to page 54, and there I found TwO again as an acrostic. With a small 'w' and everything.



Then I looked at the opposite page, what should have been page 55. But there is no 55. Instead it reads 53. So there are two page 53s in The Advancement of Learning. And on this page "Sir Francis Bacon" is written beside the text.



Bacon is quoting and crediting himself. It happens two or three times in the whole book, which is about 500 pages long. And to make it clear: TwO and Bacon are placed on these pages mimicking the way we see it in the First Folio, the difference being that the two columns of the First Folios have been replaced with two pages, and Bacon is not an acrostic.

At this point I stopped believing it was chance playing tricks with me. On the contrary, I began to believe that somewhere there was some meaning, and I became more and more obsessed with finding it. I just didn't know what the TWO meant. I also began to be more alert to the meaning of some of the other numbers, that is that 33 is Bacon and 100 is Francis Bacon and so on.

Back on the Internet, I searched Shakespeare's works for the word 'cipher'. I discovered that the word crops up seven times in all the plays. 'Cipher' often means 'code', but the original meaning may have been 'zero'. In one of the seven manifestations, where the word does not necessarily mean 'zero' something interesting happens, causing my warning lights to flash. Doubts are swept away. Both about the gravestone and the First Folio. We'll take that next time.

OK. I accept that you're in charge of the dramaturgy here, and I'll go home obediently and note down what was said at this meeting. I have to admit that so far I am fascinated, but not a hundred per cent convinced. It feels as if I'll have to swallow hard to absorb everything you've said today. I'm very unsure that the original grave stone was as claimed. If someone can catch you on that, the whole reasoning falls to pieces.

I'm fine with your skepticism, but much of what we have covered today is completely independent of the gravestone. I haven't demonstrated the link between the stone and the book. I'm telling you this in as much detail as I can so that others will be able to see what I have seen. If my thoughts can be dismissed as insanity mixed with wishful thinking, I've lost, and naturally that's not what I am aiming for. The story continues. We've only just begun.